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Honoré de Balzac

LA COMÉDIE HUMAINE

THE CAXTON EDITION

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STEALTHY EXAMINATION OF PONS'S TREASURES

** * * the sick man opened his eyes, and uttered piercing cries.*

"Thieves! robbers! help, they will murder me!"

Evidently he continued his dreaming, though wide awake, for he sat up in bed, his eyes staring, white and fixed, and without being able to move.

Caxton Edition

THE POOR RELATIONS

SECOND EPISODE

COUSIN PONS

BY

Honoré de Balzac

WITH ILLUSTRATIONS

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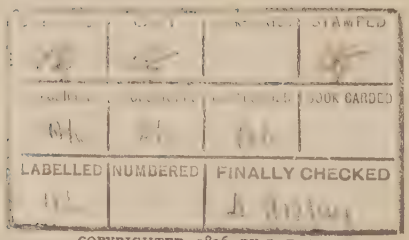

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The Human Comedy

PARISIAN LIFE

THE POOR RELATIONS

SECOND EPISODE

COUSIN PONS

COUSIN PONS

*

Toward three o'clock of an afternoon in the month of October, in the year 1844, a man about sixty years of age, though most persons would have thought him older, was passing along the Boulevard des Italiens, his nose to the scent, his lips hypocritical, like a merchant who has just concluded a sharp bargain, or like a young man who comes out of a boudoir very well satisfied with himself. This is, in Paris, the highest possible expression of personal satisfaction in man. When this old gentleman appeared in the distance, those persons who pass their days seated on the chairs along the boulevard, given up to the pleasure of analyzing the passers-by, allowed to appear on all their faces that smile, peculiar to the Parisian, which says so many things, ironical, mocking, compassionate, but which, to animate the countenance of the Parisian, blasé as he is with sights of every kind, requires the highest living curiosities. One word may explain the archæological value of this worthy man, and the cause of the smile which repeated itself, like an echo, from eye to eye. A certain actor, named

Hyacinthe, celebrated for his witticisms, being asked one day where he procured those extraordinary hats, at the mere sight of which the audience laughed, replied: "I do not have them made, I keep them!"

And in like manner, among the million actors who compose the great company of Paris there are unconscious Hyacinthes, who carry on their persons all the absurdities of their period and seem to you so completely the personification of a whole epoch, that you burst into laughter, even though you may be at that moment devoured by the bitter chagrin caused by the treachery of some former friend.

Preserving, as he did, in certain details of his costume, an uncompromising fidelity to the fashions of the year 1806, this passer-by recalled the Empire, without being too much a caricature of it. For the close observer, this fineness of discrimination renders such evocations of the past extremely valuable. But this conjunction of trifling things is worthy the analytical attention with which are endowed all these connoisseurs in the art of lounging; and to excite the general laughter, the passer-by should offer some such absurdities as those the sight of which would "stop a clock," to use a common saying, and such as the actors seek to insure the success of their entrance upon the stage. This old man, thin and dry, wore a spencer of the nut-color variety over a greenish coat with white metal buttons!—A man in a spencer in 1844—that is, you see, as if

Napoleon himself had deigned to be resuscitated for a couple of hours.

The spencer was invented, as its name indicates, by an English lord, vain no doubt of his handsome person. Before the peace of Amiens this Englishman had thus solved the problem of covering the shoulders without crushing the whole body under the weight of that frightful box-coat, which in our day has finally fallen upon the backs of the old hackney coachmen ; but, as the fine figures are in the minority, the fashion of the spencer for men had in France only a passing success, notwithstanding the fact that it was an English invention. At the sight of the spencer, the men from forty to fifty years of age clothed this gentleman in imagination with top-boots, kerseymere small-clothes of pistachio-green with knots of ribbon, and saw themselves once more in the costume of their youth! The old ladies recalled their early conquests! As to the young people, they wanted to know why this elderly Alcibiades had cut off the tails of his coat. Everything was so much in accord with this spencer that you would not have hesitated to name this passer-by an *homme-Empire*, just as we say a *meuble-Empire;* though he symbolized the Empire only for those to whom that magnificent and grandiose epoch was known, at least *de visu;* for a certain fidelity of memory as to past fashions was needful for its perception. The Empire is already so far away from us that it is not every one who can picture to himself its Gallo-Grecian reality.

The hat worn on the back of the head exposed almost the whole of the forehead with that species of bravado by which the public officials and the citizens were just then endeavoring to make head against that of the military. It was, moreover, a horrible fourteen-franc silk hat, under whose brim a pair of high and large ears had left whitish traces, vainly combated by the brush, the silk tissue badly stretched as usual over the stiff brim, was crumpled in several places, and seemed to have been attacked by leprosy, notwithstanding the careful hand which smoothed it every morning.

Under this hat, which seemed to be in danger of falling off, expanded one of those grotesque and droll faces such as the Chinese alone have been able to invent for their porcelain figures. This huge visage, perforated, like a cook's skimmer, until the holes actually produced shadows, and worked over like a Roman mask, defied all the laws of anatomy. The eye found in it no indications of interior structure. Where there should have been bones the flesh showed only gelatinous levels, and where faces ordinarily present hollows, this one exhibited only flabby protuberances. This grotesque face, crushed together in the shape of a pumpkin, made sorrowful by gray eyes surmounted by two red lines in place of eyebrows, was dominated by a nose á la Don Quixote, as a plain is dominated by a solitary boulder. This nose expressed, as Cervantes may well have observed, an innate tendency for that devotion to great things which degenerates into

credulity. This ugliness, comical as it was, however, did not excite laughter. The extreme melancholy, which revealed itself in the pale eyes of this poor man, affected the scoffer and silenced the jest upon his lips. You could not but think immediately that Nature had denied to this worthy man any expression of tenderness, under penalty of making a woman laugh, or of displeasing her. The French are silent before this misfortune, which to them appears the cruelest of all, the inability to please!

This man, so disfigured by Nature, was dressed like the poor hangers-on of good society, whom the rich themselves often enough endeavor to resemble. He wore shoes hidden by gaiters, made after the fashion of the Imperial Guard, and which permitted him, no doubt, to wear the same stockings a certain length of time. His pantaloons in black cloth, presented rusty reflections and on the folds white shining lines which, not less than the fashion of their cut, betrayed them to be not less than three years old. The amplitude of these nether garments disguised illy enough a leanness rather constitutional than derived from any Pythagorean régime; for the worthy man, endowed with a sensual mouth with thick lips showed, when he smiled, white teeth worthy of a shark. The double-breasted waistcoat, crossed like a shawl, also in black cloth but doubled by a white vest, under which appeared in the third layer the edge of a red knitted doublet, reminded you of the five waistcoats of Garat. The enormous cravat in white muslin of which the portentous tie

had been invented by a certain beau, to charm the *charming women* of 1809, extended so far behind the chin that the face seemed to plunge into it as into an abyss. A silken cord, braided to resemble hair, crossed the shirt and protected the watch against an improbable theft. The greenish coat, of a remarkable cleanliness, was of the fashion of at least three years before that of the pantaloons; but the collar in black velvet and the buttons in white metal, recently renewed, betrayed domestic care brought down to minute particulars.

This fashion of wearing the hat on the back of the head, the triple waistcoat, the immense cravat into which the chin plunged, the gaiters, the metal buttons on the greenish coat—all these signs of the Imperial fashions harmonized well with the belated perfume of the affectation of the Incroyables, with something indescribably skimped in the folds, meagre and precise in the general effect, which smelt of the school of David and recalled the spindle furniture of Jacob. You recognized readily at first glance a man of good breeding now the prey of some secret vice, or one of those holders of small incomes whose total expenses are so sharply determined by the mediocrity of their revenue that a window broken, a coat torn, or the philanthropic nuisance of a charity suffices to destroy their personal pleasures for a month. Had you been there, you would have asked yourself why a smile animated this grotesque countenance, the habitual expression of which must have been cold and sad, like that of one struggling

obscurely for the trivial necessities of life. But if you had remarked the maternal precaution with which this singular old man carried an object evidently precious, in his right hand, under the two left flaps of his double coat, as if to protect it from accidental shocks; if you had, above all, noticed the business air which the idle assume when they are charged with a commission, you would have suspected him of having found something equivalent, at least, to the lap-dog of a marquise, and of carrying it triumphantly, with the emphasized gallantry of an *homme-Empire* to some charming woman of sixty, who had not yet been able to deny herself the daily visit of her attentive cavalier. Paris is the only city in the world in which you encounter similar spectacles, which make of its boulevards a perpetual drama, played gratuitously by Frenchmen for the benefit of art.

Judging by the general structure of this bony man, and in spite of his audacious spencer, you would scarcely have classed him among the Parisian artists whose privilege, similar enough to that of the gamin of Paris, is to re-awaken in the bourgeois imaginations the joys *mirobolantes*—scrumptious—since this droll and antique word has been restored to honor. This passer-by was, however, a Grand Prix de Rome, the composer of the prize cantata crowned by the Institute about the time of the re-establishment of the Academy at Rome, in fact, he was M. Sylvain Pons!—the author of many celebrated romances warbled by our mothers, of two or three operas

performed in 1815 and 1816, and of several unpublished scores. This worthy man was now finishing his day as leader of an orchestra in a theatre of the boulevards. He was, thanks to his figure, professor of music in several boarding-schools for young ladies, and had no other income than his salary, and his pay for his private lessons. To be giving private lessons at his time of life!—How many mysteries behind this poor and unromantic situation!

This last of the spencer-wearers carried then upon his person something more than the symbols of the Empire, he bore a great lesson written upon his three waistcoats. He exhibited gratuitously one of those innumerable victims of that fatal and disastrous system called *concours*, which rules still in France after one hundred years of existence without results. This hotbed for intellect was invented by Poisson de Marigny, the brother to Madame de Pompadour, appointed, about 1746, director of the Beaux-Arts. Endeavor to count on your fingers the men of genius furnished in a century by these laureates! In the first place, never will any effort, administrative or scholastic, replace the miracles of chance or of opportunity to which the world owes its great men. Among all the mysteries of generation, this one is the most inaccessible to our ambitious modern analysis. What should we think of the Egyptians who, as it is said, invented ovens to hatch chickens if they had not immediately given food to these same chickens? And yet this is what is done in France, where they endeavor to produce artists

by the hothouse of the *concours;* for them the sculptor, the painter, the engraver, the musician, obtained by this mechanical process, there is no longer any more concern for them than that which the dandy has for the flowers in his buttonhole last evening. It happens that the man of real talent is Greuze or Watteau, Félicien David or Pagnesi, Géricault or Decamps, Auber or David (d'Angers,) Eugène Delacroix or Meissonier, men caring little for the Grand Prix and who come up in the open ground under the rays of that invisible sun that is called Vocation.

*

Sent by the State to Rome to become a great musician, Sylvain Pons had brought back from there the taste for antiquities and for the beautiful things of art. He was an admirable connoisseur in all of these works, masterpieces of the hand and of the brain, which have been comprehended lately under that popular word bric-à-brac. This son of Euterpe returned then to Paris in 1810, a ferocious collector, possessed of pictures, statuettes, frames of all kinds, sculptures in ivory, in wood, enamels, porcelains, etc., which during his academical sojourn in Rome had absorbed the greater part of his paternal inheritance as much for the cost of transportation as from the price of their acquisition. He had expended in the same fashion the inheritance derived from his mother during the journey which he made in Italy, after these three official years passed in Rome. He wished to visit at his leisure Venice, Milan, Florence, Bologna, Naples, sojourning for a time in each city, as a dreamer, as a philosopher, with the careless ease of an artist who trusts to his talent for his livelihood, as courtesans trust to their beauty. Pons was happy during this splendid journey, as much so as could be a man full of soul and of delicacy, to whom his ugliness forbids all *success with women*, according to the hallowed phrase of 1809, and who found the things of life always below

the level of the ideal type which he had created for himself; but he had accepted this discord between his soul and the realities of life. This sentiment of the beautiful, preserved pure and vivid in his heart, was no doubt the source of those ingenious melodies, delicate, full of grace, which made his musical reputation from 1810 to 1814. Every reputation which is founded in France on the vogue, on the fashion, according to the ephemeral follies of Paris, produces men like Pons. There is no other country so exacting in the matter of great things and so disdainfully indulgent for the little ones. If Pons—soon to be drowned in floods of German harmony and in the productions of Rossini—was still in 1824 an agreeable musician, known by a few late romantic songs, we may imagine what he had become in 1831! Thus in 1844, the year in which commences the only drama of this obscure life, Sylvain Pons had attained to the value of an antediluvian quaver; the music dealers were completely ignorant of his existence, although he composed, for very moderate remuneration, the scores for certain pieces at his own and at neighboring theatres.

This worthy man, moreover, was justly appreciative of the famous composers of our epoch; a fine performance of a beautiful passage made him weep; but his religion never arrived at that point where it bordered upon mania, as it did with the Krieslers of Hoffmann; he allowed none of it to appear on the surface. He enjoyed it within himself, after the

manner of the hashish-eaters, or of the Theriakis. The gift of admiration, of comprehension, the one faculty by means of which an ordinary man becomes the brother of a great poet, is so rare in Paris, where all ideas are like the transient travelers in an inn, that for this alone we should give to Pons our respectful esteem. The fact of his own lack of success may seem exaggerated, but he candidly admitted his weakness on the score of harmony; he had neglected the study of counterpoint; and the modern orchestration, so immeasurably developed, appeared to him impossible at the very moment when by fresh study he might have been able to have maintained himself among the modern composers, to have become not a Rossini, but an Hérold. However, he found in the pleasures of the collector such lively compensation for his failure to acquire glory that if he had been compelled to choose between the possession of his curiosities and the name of Rossini—would it be believed?—Pons would have decided for his dear cabinet. The old musician practised the maxim of Chenavard, that learned collector of priceless engravings, who pretended that no one could have any pleasure in contemplating a Ruysdael, a Hobbema, a Holbein, a Raphael, a Murillo, a Greuze, a Sebastian del Piombo, a Giorgione, an Albert Dürer, unless the picture had cost him no more than fifty francs. Pons never allowed himself a purchase over the cost of one hundred francs; and if he paid for an object fifty francs, that object must be worth at least three thousand. The finest thing in the world,

if it cost three hundred francs, did not exist for him. Rare indeed had been his bargains, but he possessed the three elements of the collector's success: the legs of the deer, the leisure of an idler, and the patience of a Jew.

This system, practised during forty years, at Rome as at Paris, had borne fruit. After having expended, since his return from Rome, about two thousand francs a year, Pons now concealed from every eye a collection of masterpieces of every species, which amounted in his catalogue to the fabulous number of 1907.

From 1811 to 1816, during his wanderings about Paris, he had found for ten francs things that would sell in the present day for one thousand or twelve hundred. There were pictures selected among the forty-five thousand paintings which are annually offered for sale in the auction rooms at Paris, porcelains of Sèvres, *pâte tendre*, brought from the Auvergnats, those satellites of the Black Band who brought back in their hand-carts the marvels of France-Pompadour. In fact, he had scraped together relics of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, doing justice to the men of wit and of genius of the French school, the great unknown, the Lepautres, Lavallée-Poussins, etc., who had created the style of Louis XV., the style of Louis XVI., and whose works supply to-day the pretended originality of our modern artist, who may be seen forever bending over the treasures in the Cabinet des Estampes, in order to produce new designs by making clever copies. Pons owed

many of his specimens to exchanges, that source of ineffable happiness to collectors! The pleasure of buying curiosities is only the second; the first, is to barter for them. Pons had been the first to collect snuff-boxes and miniatures. Without fame in the bric-à-brac-ology, for he never haunted auction rooms and he never showed himself in the shops of the great merchants, Pons was ignorant of the venal value of his treasures.

The late Dusommerard had, indeed, endeavored to establish relations with the musician; but that prince of bric-à-brac died without ever having been able to penetrate into the Pons museum, the only one which could have compared with the celebrated collection of Sauvageot. Between Pons and M. Sauvageot there were certain similarities. M. Sauvageot, musician like Pons, like him without much fortune, had followed the same methods, by the same means, from the same love of art, with the same hatred for those illustrious rich who collect treasures for the purpose of competing skilfully in the markets with the dealers. Like his rival, his competitor, his antagonist in the quest for all these marvels of handicraft, for the prodigies of workmanship, Pons felt in his heart an insatiable avarice, the love of a lover for a beautiful mistress, and a *resale* in the halls of the rue des Jeûneurs under the hammer of an auctioneer seemed to him a crime of lèse-bric-à-brac. He kept his collection to enjoy it at all hours, for the souls created to admire great works have the sublime faculty of the true lover; they

experience as much enjoyment to-day as yesterday, for them there is no satiety and masterpieces are happily ever young. Thus, the object held so paternally under the tails of his coat was undoubtedly one of those treasure-troves which one carries away with what ardor, O amateurs! you alone can truly know!

At the first outline of this biographical sketch, every one will cry out: "Why, in spite of his ugliness, this is the happiest man on earth!" In fact, no ennui, no spleen, can resist the soothing moxa which is brought to the soul in giving it a hobby. All you who can no longer drink of that which in all time has been called the *cup of pleasure*, take up the task of collecting something or other, no matter what—there are even collectors of posters!—and you will find you will get back all your ingots of joy in small change. A hobby, a mania, is pleasure transformed into the shape of an idea! Nevertheless, do not envy the worthy Pons, this sentiment, like others of its kind, is based on error.

This man of innate delicacy, whose soul lived by its unwearying admiration for the magnificence of human workmanship—that noble struggle with the forces of Nature—was the slave of that one of the seven capital sins which God should punish the least severely. Pons was a gourmand. His lack of fortune and his passion for bric-à-brac condemned him to an ascetic diet so abhorrent to his fine taste, that the old celibate promptly solved the question by going to dine daily with his friends. Now, under

the Empire, there existed, much more than in our days, a worship for celebrated people, perhaps because of their small number and their lack of political pretension. One became a poet, a writer, a musician, at so little cost! Pons, then regarded as the probable rival of the Nicolos of the Paërs, and of the Bertons, received, therefore, so many invitations that he was obliged to enter them in a memorandum book, as the lawyers record their cases. In his quality of artist he offered copies of his songs to all his amphitryons. He *touched the piano* in their houses, he presented them with boxes at Feydeau, the theatre to which he was attached; he organized concerts for them; he even played sometimes on the violin in the houses of his relatives in getting up little balls. The handsomest men in France were in those days exchanging sabre cuts with the handsomest men of the Coalition; the ugliness of Pons was therefore considered "original" in accordance with the grand law promulgated by Molière in the famous couplet of Éliante. When he had rendered some service to some *fine lady* he sometimes heard himself called a charming man, but his experience of happiness never went beyond the hearing of the words.

During this period, which lasted about six years, from 1810 to 1816, Pons contracted the fatal habit of dining well, of seeing those with whom he dined living extravagantly, procuring delicacies, unbottling their best wines, solicitous about the dessert, the coffees, the liqueurs, and giving him of their best, as

one did under the Empire, when many households imitated the splendors of the kings, the queens, the princes with which Paris was then crowded. It was then very much the fashion to play at royalty, as to-day it is to play at parliament, in creating crowds of societies, with presidents, vice-presidents and secretaries; societies for the linen-trade, for the wine-trade, for the silk-trade, agricultural societies, industrial societies, etc. It has even been pushed to the extent of seeking out social diseases that we may organize their reformers into societies! A stomach whose education has been thus conducted, reacts necessarily upon the moral constitution and corrupts it through the high culinary knowledge which it has acquired. Sensuality, lurking in every fold of the heart, speaks there with sovereign voice, subverts the will, the sense of honor, demands its gratification at any price. No one has ever yet depicted the exactions of the human palate, they escape literary criticism through the sheer necessity of living; but no one has computed the number of those whom the table has ruined. In this respect, the table in Paris is the rival of the courtesan; it is, moreover, the receipt of which she is the expenditure. When, from the estate of perpetual guest, Pons had arrived, through the decline of his reputation as artist, at the estate of sponging guest, it was impossible for him to pass from these well-served tables to the Spartan broth of a forty-sous restaurant. Alas! he shivered in reflecting that his self-respect demanded such great sacrifices, and he

felt himself capable of the utmost meanness in order to continue to live well, to enjoy the luxuries of the season, and in fine to *gobble*—vulgar but expressive word—the delicious little dishes. Like a marauding bird flying away with a full crop and warbling an air by way of thanks, Pons had come to feel a certain pleasure in thus living at the cost of society, which required of him—what? Jest and amusement. Accustomed, like all bachelors who hate their own homes and live in the houses of others, to these forms, to these social grimaces, which replace in the social world true sentiments, he made use of compliments as he did of small change, and with respect to persons he was satisfied to take them as they were ticketed, without examining too closely into their real value.

This not intolerable state of affairs lasted during ten more years; but what years! It was like a rainy autumn. During all this time, Pons managed to keep his gratuitous place at table by rendering himself necessary in all the houses in which he dined. He set foot in the fatal path of executing a multitude of commissions, of supplying the place of the porters and servants on very many occasions. Often employed to make purchases, he became the honest and innocent spy circulating from one family to another; but he received no thanks for so many errands and so many meannesses.

"Pons is a good fellow," they said. "He does not know what to do with his time, he is only too happy to trot about for us—and then what else would he do?"

Soon, however, the fatal chill that the old man diffuses around him began to manifest itself. This iciness extends, it produces its effect on the moral temperature, above all, when the old man is ugly and poor. Is that not to be triply old? It was the winter of life, the winter of the red nose, of wan cheeks, of all kinds of numbness!

*

From 1836 to 1843, Pons saw himself but seldom invited. Far from seeking this parasite, each family accepted him as they accepted their taxes; they no longer held him of any account, not even for the real services which he rendered them. The families among which the poor man circulated, all of them without any respect for art, worshipping only material results, prized only that which they had gained since 1830—fortunes or eminent social positions. Therefore, Pons, being without sufficient dignity of mind or manners to inspire that awe which wit or genius imposes on the bourgeois soul, had naturally ended with becoming less than nothing, without, however becoming altogether despised. Although he suffered in this world of cruel sufferings like all timid people, he bore his sufferings silently. Then, too, he had become accustomed by degrees to repress his feelings, to make of his heart a sanctuary into which he could retire. This phenomenon many superficial people translate as egotism. The resemblance is sufficiently great between the solitary soul and the egotist for the evil speakers to seem to have reason on their side as against the man of heart, above all, at Paris, where no one observes carefully, where everything is rapid as a flood, where everything passes like the Ministries!

Cousin Pons was thus found guilty, under an

indictment of egotism drawn retrospectively against him, for the world always ends by condemning those whom it accuses. Do we not realize how much an unmerited discredit overwhelms the timid natures? Who will ever paint the unhappiness of timidity! This situation, which became more and more aggravated from day to day, will explain the sadness stamped upon the countenance of this poor musician who lived by a long series of servile surrenders. But the abject meannesses which every passion exacts are so many bonds in themselves; the more a passion demands the more it binds you; it turns all these sacrifices into an ideal negative treasure in which man sees immense riches. After enduring the patronizingly insolent regard of some rich bourgeois, stiff with stupidity, Pons tasted like a vengeance the glass of port wine, the quail *au gratin*, which he had commenced to discuss, saying to himself:

"It is not too dear!"

To the eye of the moralist there may be found, however, in this life, certain extenuating circumstances. In fact, man exists only through some species of satisfaction. A man without a passion, a just man made perfect, is a monster, a demi-angel who has not yet his wings. The angels only have heads in the Catholic mythology. Here below, on the earth, the just is the wearisome Grandisson for whom the Venus of the slums herself is without sex. Now, excepting certain rare and vulgar adventures during his travels in Italy, where the climate was

without doubt the cause of his success, Pons had never seen a woman smile upon him. Many men have this luckless destiny. Pons was born out of time; his father and his mother had obtained him in their old age, and he bore the stigmata of this unseasonable birth in his cadaverous complexion, which seemed to have been contracted in the jars of alcohol in which science preserves certain extraordinary fœtuses. This artist, endowed with a tender, dreamy, delicate soul, forced to accept the character imposed upon him by his outward appearance, despaired of ever being loved. Celibacy was, therefore, with him less a choice than a necessity. Gluttony, the sin of virtuous monks, tendered to him her arms; he threw himself into them, as he had thrown himself into the adoration of works of arts and into his worship of music. Good living and bric-à-brac were for him the small change for a woman; as to music, that was his profession, and where can we find a man who loves the trade by which he lives! In the long run, it is of profession as it is of marriage. You feel of them only the inconveniences.

Brillat-Savarin has justified, from conviction, the art of gastronomy; but perhaps he has not sufficiently insisted on the real pleasure which man finds at table. Digestion, which employs the forces of the human body, constitutes an internal combat which among the gastrolaters is equivalent to the very highest enjoyment of love. There is felt such a vast development of vital capacity, that the brain annuls itself in the interests of that secondary brain

placed in the diaphragm, and intoxication ensues from the very inertia of all the faculties. The boa-constrictors gorged with buffalo are so very drunken that they allow themselves to be killed. After forty years, what man is there who dares to go to work after his dinner?—For this reason all great men have been sober. Sick people, in convalescing from a serious illness, and to whom a selected nourishment is carefully doled out, have often observed a species of gastric inebriation produced by a single chicken wing. The wise Pons, all of whose enjoyments were concentrated in the play of his stomach, found himself often in the situation of these convalescents; he exacted from good living all the sensations it was capable of bestowing, and he had so far obtained them daily. No one dares to bid farewell to a fixed habit. Many a suicide has stopped short on the threshold of death by the recollection of the café where he played his nightly game of dominoes.

In 1835, chance avenged Pons for the indifference of the fair sex, it gave him what is familiarly called, a staff for his old age. This good man, old from his birth, found in friendship a prop for his life, he contracted the only marriage which society permitted him—he espoused a man, an old man, a musician like himself. Were it not for La Fontaine's divine fable, this sketch might have had for title, "The Two Friends." But would not that have been a literary outrage, a profanation before which every true writer would recoil? That masterpiece of our fable-maker, at once the disclosure of his soul and

the history of his dreams, should have the eternal privilege of this title. The page on which the poet has engraved those words, THE TWO FRIENDS, is one of the sacred properties, a temple in which each generation will enter respectfully and which the entire universe will visit so long as the art of printing endures.

The friend of Pons was a professor of the piano whose life and whose inclinations sympathized so well with his own that he said he had known him too late for happiness; for their acquaintance, begun at the distribution of prizes in a boarding school, only dated from 1834. Never, perhaps, did two souls find themselves so similar in that ocean of human life which took its rise, against the will of God, in the terrestrial paradise. These two musicians became in a short time each a necessity for the other. Reciprocally confidential one with the other, they were in a week like two brothers. Finally, Schmucke no more believed that there could exist a Pons than Pons was able to conceive that there was a Schmucke. This alone will suffice to depict these two worthy souls, but every intelligence does not equally appreciate the brevity of synthesis. A slight demonstration, therefore, becomes necessary for the benefit of the incredulous.

This pianist, like all pianists, was a German, German like the great Liszt, and the great Mendelssohn, German like Steibelt, German like Mozart and Dusseck, German like Meyer, German like Dœhler, German like Thalberg, like Dreschok, like Hiller,

like Léopold Mayer, like Crammer, like Zimmermann and Kalkbrenner, like Herz, Woëtz, Karr, Wolff, Pixis, Clara Wieck—in short, all Germans. Although a great composer, Schmucke could only point the way, so much did his character lack the audacity necessary to a man of genius to manifest himself in music. The simple naiveté of many Germans is not continual, it comes to a stop; that which remains to them after a certain age is taken, as one takes the water from a canal, from the spring of one's youth, and they use it to fertilize their success in all things, science, art or fortune, as it serves them to escape distrust. In France, some subtle people replace this German innocence by the solidity of the Parisian grocer. But Schmucke had kept all his child-like simplicity, just as Pons carried on his person, unawares, relics of the Empire. This genuine and noble German was at once both the play and the audience, he made his music for himself. He lived in Paris as a nightingale lives in its forest, and he there sang, alone of his kind, during twenty years, until the moment when, meeting Pons, he met his other self—see *A Daughter of Eve*.

Pons and Schmucke had both of them in abundance in the heart and in the character those childlike sentimentalities which distinguish the Germans, such as the passion for flowers, as the worship of all natural effects, which led them to set glass globes in their gardens in order that they might see in miniature the great landscape which they had before their eyes; like that predisposition for discovery

which will carry a German savant one hundred leagues in his slippers to find a truth which looks at him laughing, all the while seated on the edge of the well under the jessamine of his own court-yard: or, in short, that imperious need of attributing psychical significance to the trifles of creation which produces the inexplicable works of Jean-Paul Richter, the printed intoxications of Hoffmann, and the parapets in folio which Germany sets up around the most simple questions, excavated into abysses, at the bottom of which nothing is to be found but a German. Catholics both of them, going to the mass together, they fulfilled their religious duties like children who never have anything to reveal to their confessors. They believed firmly that music, the language of Heaven, was to ideas and sentiments that which ideas and sentiments are to speech, and they conversed interminably on this system, in replying one to the other by orgies of music, demonstrating to themselves their own convictions, after the fashion of all lovers. Schmucke was as absent-minded as Pons was intent. If Pons was a collector, Schmucke was a dreamer; this one studied beautiful moral things, the other saved the beautiful material ones. Pons saw and bought a porcelain cup while Schmucke was blowing his nose in thinking over some theme of Rossini, of Bellini, of Beethoven, of Mozart, and hunting through the world of sentiment to find the origin or the rejoinder to this musical phrase. Schmucke, whose economies were effected at hazard; Pons, prodigal by his besetting

passion, arrived one and the other at the same result—nothing in the purse on the St. Sylvester of every year.

Without this friendship Pons might have died of his chagrin ; but as soon as he had another heart into which to discharge his own, life became bearable to him. The first time he confided his troubles to Schmucke, the worthy German counselled him to live as he did himself, on bread and on cheese, in his own house, rather than go abroad to eat dinners for for which he was made to pay so dearly. Alas ! Pons dared not avow to Schmucke that within him the heart and the stomach were enemies, that the stomach demanded that which caused the heart to suffer, that he was obliged to have, at any price, a good dinner to relish, just as a man of gallantry requires a mistress to—torment. In course of time Schmucke came to understand Pons, for he was too much of a German to have the quickness of observation which the French enjoy, and he loved the poor Pons only the better for it. Nothing strengthens friendship more among two friends than for one to feel himself superior to the other. An angel would have had nothing to say in seeing Schmucke, when he rubbed his hands at the moment in which he discovered the intensity which the love of good eating had developed in his friend. In fact, the next day the good German added to their breakfast certain dainties which he had bought himself, and he took pains to have every day something new for his friend ; for ever since their union they

breakfasted every day together in their own lodgings.

It would argue little knowledge of Paris to believe for a moment that the two friends had escaped Parisian ridicule, which has never respected anything. Schmucke and Pons when they married their wealth and their poverty, had conceived the economical idea of lodging together, and they divided between them the rent of an apartment very unequally divided, situated in a quiet house, in the quiet Rue de Normandie, in the Marais. As they often went out together and traversed the same boulevards, side by side, the idlers of the quarter had christened them *the two Nut-crackers*. This nickname relieves us from the necessity of giving here the portrait of Schmucke, who was to Pons what the nurse of Niobe, the famous statue of the Vatican, is to the Venus of the Tribune.

Madame Cibot, the concierge of this house, was the pivot on which the domestic arrangements of the two Nut-crackers turned; but she plays such an important part in the drama of their double existence that it is better to reserve her portrait until the moment of her entrance on this scene.

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That which now remains to relate of the moral constitution of these two beings, is that which is precisely the most difficult to bring to the comprehension of the ninety-nine one-hundredths of the readers in this forty-seventh year of the nineteenth century, probably because of the prodigious financial development which has followed the establishment of railroads. It is a very little thing, and yet it is a great deal. In fact, it is necessary to give an idea of the excessive delicacy of these two hearts. Let us borrow a figure of speech from the railway, if only in repayment of the loans they obtain from us. To-day the trains, in dashing along the rails, grind into the iron imperceptible grains of sand. Introduce one of these grains of sand, invisible to the traveler, into his kidneys, and he endures the pains of that frightful malady, the gravel; possibly dies of it. Very well; that which for our society, rushing along its metallic way with the rapidity of a locomotive, is the invisible grain of sand of which it takes no notice—this grain, perpetually ground into the fibres of these two beings on every occasion, was to them like a gravel of the heart. Full of exceeding tenderness for the sorrows of others, each of them mourned over his own powerlessness, and in the matter of their own feelings, both had the exquisite sensitiveness of the invalid. Old age,

the continued spectacle of the Parisian drama, nothing had hardened these two souls, fresh, child-like and pure. The longer these two beings went their way the keener were their inward sufferings. Alas! it is ever thus with the chaste natures, the tranquil thinkers, the true poets, who have never fallen into any excesses.

Since the reunion of these two old men, their occupations, which were very much alike, had assumed that fraternal sort of gait which distinguishes in Paris the hackney-coach horses. Rising at seven in the morning, winter and summer, after their breakfast they went to give their lessons in the boarding-schools, where, on occasions, each supplied the other's place. Toward midday Pons went to his theatre, when there happened to be a rehearsal, and he gave to idleness every moment of his leisure. In the evening the two friends met at the theatre, where Pons had secured employment for Schmucke, in this wise:

At the time when Pons first met Schmucke, he had just obtained, without seeking it, that marshal's baton of all unrecognized composers, the conductor's staff, as leader of an orchestra! Thanks to Comte Popinot, then Minister, this place was secured for the poor musician at the moment when this bourgeois hero of the revolution of July gave the management of the theatre to one of those old friends for whom a parvenue blushes when, rolling in his carriage, he perceives in Paris, some companion of his youth, shabby, seedy, out at elbows, wearing a

coat from which the color has fled, and with his nose set for affairs too lofty for his fugitive capital. This friend, named Gaudissart, formerly commercial traveler, had been at one time very useful in contributing to the success of the great house of Popinot. Popinot, now a count and peer of France, after having been twice Minister, never forgot THE ILLUSTRIOUS GAUDISSART! On the contrary, he wished to give the traveler an opportunity to replenish his wardrobe and refill his purse; for politics, the vanities of the citizen court, had in no wise corrupted the heart of the former druggist. Gaudissart, always crazy about women, asked for the lease of a theatre which had lately failed, and the Minister, in giving it to him, had taken care to send him a few old amateurs of the fair sex, sufficiently rich to create a profitable stock company, interested chiefly in the lower limbs of the performers. Pons, a parasite of the Hotel Popinot, was a condition of this license. The Gaudissart company, which, moreover, made its fortune, conceived in 1834, the intention of realizing on the boulevard this great idea—an opera for the people. The music for the ballets and for the spectacular pieces required a passable leader of the orchestra, and one who was something of a composer. The management to which the Gaudissart company succeeded had been too long on the point of failure to possess a copyist. Pons thus introduced Schmucke into the theatre, in the capacity of superintendent of scores, an obscure occupation which nevertheless required serious musical knowledge.

Schmucke, under Pons' advice, made some arrangement with the chief of this service at the Opéra-Comique, by which he avoided the mechanical details. The association of Pons and Schmucke had marvelous results. Schmucke, like all Germans, was very strong in harmony, and attended carefully to the instrumentation of the scores for which Pons supplied the songs. When the connoisseurs admired some fresh composition which served as an accompaniment to two or three popular pieces, they explained them to themselves by the word *progress*, without searching for the authors. Pons and Schmucke were eclipsed in their own glory, as certain people have been drowned in their own bath-tubs. At Paris, especially since 1830, no one arrives at eminence without pushing, *quibuscumque viis*, and pushing very strongly, through a frightful crowd of competitors; for this was required, naturally, great strength in the loins, and the two friends had at heart that gravel which hinders all ambitious actions.

Ordinarily, Pons presented himself at the orchestra of his theatre at about eight o'clock, the hour at which are given those pieces in popular favor of which the overtures and the accompaniments require the tyranny of the leader's baton. This easy arrangement exists in most of the smaller theatres; but Pons was allowed in this respect even more freedom, because of the great disinterestedness he showed in his relations with the management. Moreover, Schmucke supplied Pons' place, if necessary. In course of time the position of Schmucke

in the orchestra became a settled one. The Illustrious Gaudissart had recognized, without saying anything about it, the value and usefulness of Pons' assistant. The introduction into the orchestra of a piano, as at the grand theatres, had become obligatory. This piano, played gratuitously by Schmucke, was established near the desk of the leader of the orchestra, close to which sat the volunteer supernumerary. When they got to know this good German, without ambition or pretension, all the musicians accepted him heartily. The management, for a moderate stipend, put Schmucke in charge of those instruments which are not usually represented in the orchestras of the theatres of the boulevard, and which are often necessary, such as the piano, the *viole d'amour*, the English horn, the violoncello, the harp, the castanets for the cachucha, the bells, the Saxophone, etc. The Germans, though they may not know how to play the glorious instruments of liberty, have a natural gift for playing on the instruments of music.

The two old artists, extremely beloved at the theatre, lived there like philosophers. They had shut their eyes to the inherent evils of the company in which the corps de ballet mingles with the actors and actresses, one of the worst combinations that the necessity of drawing good houses has created for the torment of directors, authors and musicians. A sincere respect for others and for himself had won the general esteem for the good and modest Pons. Moreover, in every sphere a clear life and a spotless

honesty command a sort of admiration even from the worst hearts. At Paris a noble virtue has the success of a large diamond, of a rare curiosity. Not an actor, not an author, not a dancer, however bold she might be, would have permitted the least jest or the smallest trick against Pons or his friend. Pons showed himself sometimes in the foyer, but Schmucke knew only the subterranean passage which led from the exterior of the theatre to the orchestra. Between the acts, when he assisted at a representation, the good old German ventured to look about him at the house and sometimes question the first flute—a young man born at Strasburg of a German family of Kehl—concerning the eccentric personages who nearly always garnish the regions of the proscenium. Little by little the childlike imagination of Schmucke, whose social education was undertaken by this flute, admitted the fabulous existence of the lorette, the possibilities of marriages in the thirteenth arrondissement, the prodigalities of a suggestive subject, and the contraband commerce of the box-openers. The innocencies of vice appeared to this worthy man the last word of Babylonian iniquity, and he smiled at them as he would have done at Chinese arabesques. The knowing ones will readily understand that Pons and Schmucke were exploited, to use a phrase of the day; but that which they lost in money they gained in consideration and good will.

After the success of a ballet which commenced the rapid fortune of the Gaudissart company, the directors presented Pons with a group in silver,

attributed to Benvenuto Cellini, the astounding price of which had been a topic of conversation in the green room. It was an affair of twelve hundred francs! The poor, honest man wished to return this gift! Gaudissart had the greatest pains to make him keep it.

"Ah, if we could only find," said he to his associate, "actors of that stripe!"

This double life, so calm in appearance, was troubled solely by the vice to which Pons sacrificed this ferocious necessity of dining abroad. Thus, whenever Schmucke chanced to be at home when Pons was dressing, the good German bewailed this fatal habit.

"Und subbose eet mayg you vat," he sometimes cried, with his Teutonic accent.

And Schmucke brooded over schemes to cure his friend of this degrading vice, for two friends are endowed, in the moral order of things, with that perfection to which is brought the sense of smell in dogs; they scent the cares of their friends, they divine the causes, and they are preoccupied with them.

Pons, who wore always on the little finger of his left hand a diamond ring, tolerated under the Empire, but now considered ridiculous; Pons, far too much of a troubadour, and too much of a Frenchman, gave no sign on his physiognomy of the divine serenity which tempered the frightful ugliness of Schmucke. The German had recognized in the melancholy expression on the face of his friend the

increasing difficulties which rendered this trade of the parasite more and more painful. In fact, in October, 1844, the number of houses where Pons dined had become naturally very much restricted. The poor chief of orchestra, reduced to the rounds of his own relations, had, as we shall see, extended beyond all bounds the meaning of the word family.

The ancient laureate was first cousin to the first wife of M. Camusot, the rich silk merchant of the Rue des Bourdonnais, a demoiselle Pons, sole heiress of one of the famous Pons Brothers, embroiderers to the Court, a house in which the father and mother of the musician had been sleeping-partners, after having founded it before the Revolution of 1789, and which was purchased by M. Rivet in 1815, from the father of the first Madame Camusot. This Camusot, having retired from business for the last ten years, was, in 1844, member of the General Council on Manufactures, Deputy, etc. Taken into friendship by the tribe of Camusot, the honest Pons considered himself as cousin of the children which the silk merchant had had by his second marriage, although they were in fact nothing whatever to him, not even connections.

The second Madame Camusot being a demoiselle Cardot, Pons introduced himself as a relation of the Camusots to the numerous family of the Cardots, a second bourgeois tribe which through its marriages formed a society not less important than that of the Camusots. Cardot, the notary, brother of the second Madame Camusot, had married a demoiselle

Chiffreville. The celebrated family of the Chiffrevilles, the head of all chemical products, was united with the wholesale drug trade of which the cock of the roost was for a long time M. Anselme Popinot, whom the Revolution of July had launched, as we know, into the very heart of the most dynastic politics. And Pons, hanging to the skirts of the Camusots and the Cardots, came into the family of the Chiffrevilles, and from thence into that of the Popinots—always in his character of a cousin of cousins.

This slight sketch of the latest relations of the old musician will enable the reader to understand how it was that in 1844 he was received on familiar terms; first, in the house of M. le Comte Popinot, peer of France, formerly Minister of Agriculture and of Commerce; secondly, in the house of M. Cardot, retired notary and now Mayor and Deputy of an arrondissement of Paris; third, in that of the old M. Camusot, deputy member of the Municipal Council of Paris and of the Council-General of Manufactures, now in expectation of a peerage; fourth, in that of M. Camusot de Marville, son of the first wife, and therefore the true, the only real cousin to Pons, although once removed.

This Camusot, who, to distinguish himself from his father and his half-brother, had added to his name that of his estate of de Marville, was, in 1844, president of chamber of the Cour Royale of Paris.

The former notary, Cardot, having married his daughter to his successor, named Berthier, Pons

being part of the business, as it were, managed to lay hold of that dinner also—"before a notary," as he said.

Such was the bourgeois firmament which Pons called his family, and in which he had so painfully maintained his rights to a knife and fork.

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Of these ten houses, that one in which the artist quite expected to be the most welcome, the household of the President Camusot, was the object of his greatest care. But, alas! the president's wife, daughter of the late sieur Thirion, usher to the Cabinet of the Kings Louis XVIII. and Charles X., had never treated very kindly her husband's half-cousin. In endeavoring to soften this terrible relation, Pons had lost much time, for after having given gratuitous lessons to Mademoiselle Camusot he had found it impossible to make a musician of that rather florid young lady. Now, Pons, with the precious object in his hand, was at this moment directing his course toward the house of his cousin, the president, where he used to fancy himself, on entering, in the Tuileries, so great an effect did the solemn green draperies, the hangings of Carmelite brown, the moquette carpets, the severe furniture of this apartment, in which breathed the most severely magisterial air, act upon his mind. Strangely enough, he felt at his ease in the Hotel Popinot, in the Rue Basse-du-Rempart, doubtless because of the works of art which he found there; for the former Minister had, since his entrance into political life, contracted the mania for collecting choice things, probably in opposition to the science of politics, which collects, secretly, the vilest actions.

The President de Marville lived in the Rue de Hanovre, in a house bought by his wife within the last ten years, after the death of her father and mother, the sieur and dame Thirion, who had left her about one hundred and fifty thousand francs of their savings. This house, whose aspect on the street where it faces north is sufficiently gloomy, enjoys a southern exposure at the back on a court-yard beyond which extends a rather handsome garden. The magistrate occupied the whole of the first floor, which, under Louis XV., had been the residence of one of the greatest financiers of the time. The second floor being leased to a rich old lady, the whole house presented a tranquil and honorable appearance quite in keeping with its official character. The remains of the magnificent estate of Marville, to the acquisition of which the magistrate had devoted his savings of twenty years, as well as the fortune derived from his mother, comprised the chateau, a splendid monument such as may still be met with in Normandy, and a good farm which brought in twelve thousand francs a year. A park of one hundred hectares surrounded the chateau. This luxury, princely in this day, cost the president one thousand crowns, so that his lands did not bring him in more than nine thousand francs in hand, as they say. These nine thousand francs and his salary gave to the president an income of some twenty thousand francs all told, apparently a sufficient sum, especially as he expected the half of his father's property, seeing that he was the only

child of the first marriage; but the life of Paris and the demands of their official position had obliged M. and Madame Marville to expend almost the whole of their revenues. Up to 1834 they were pressed for money.

This inventory of their property will explain why Mademoiselle de Marville, a young lady of twenty-three years of age, was not yet married, in spite of her one hundred thousand francs of *dot*, and in spite also of the tempting bait of her future expectations, skilfully and frequently, but fruitlessly presented. For at least five years Cousin Pons had been listening to the mournful complaints of the president's wife, who saw all the deputies married, the new judges of the tribunals already fathers of families, and who had vainly displayed the apparent prospects of Mademoiselle de Marville before the uncharmed eyes of the young Viscount Popinot, eldest son of the great chief of the wholesale druggists, for whose especial benefit, according to the envious souls of the Quartier des Lombards, quite as much as for that of the younger branch, the Revolution of July had been brought about.

When Pons reached the Rue de Choiseul, and was about to turn into the Rue de Hanovre, he experienced that inexplicable emotion which is the torment of pure consciences, which inflicts on them the terror felt by the greatest scoundrels at sight of a gendarme, and which in this case was caused entirely by the doubt as to how he might be received by Madame la Présidente. This grain of

sand which was tearing the fibres of his heart, had never yet worn itself smooth; its angles, on the contrary, grew only more and more cutting, and the inhabitants of this house incessantly polished and sharpened them still further. In fact, the small account that the Camusots made of their cousin Pons, his cheapness in the bosom of the family, reacted upon the domestics, who, without manifestations of actual dislike toward him, considered him as a species of pauper.

The capital enemy of poor Pons was a certain Madeleine Vivet, an old maid, lean and dry, the femme de chambre of Madame C. de Marville and of her daughter. This Madeleine, in spite of her pimpled complexion, and perhaps because of these pimples, and of the viperous sinuosities of her figure, had taken into her head to become Madame Pons. She displayed vainly before the eyes of the old celibate her twenty thousand francs of savings, but Pons declined the pimpled happiness. Therefore, this Dido of the ante-chamber, who wished to become the cousin of her masters, played the most spiteful tricks upon the poor old musician. When she heard his step on the stairs, she would exclaim shrilly, "Ah! here comes the *sponger*," trying to make him hear the words. If she waited at table in the absence of the footman, she would pour very little wine and a great deal of water into the glass of her victim, giving him, at the same time, the difficult task of getting it safely to his lips without spilling a drop, full as it was to overflowing. She would

forget to serve the worthy man until reminded of it by her mistress—and in what a tone !—the poor cousin blushed at it—and then she would spill the sauce on his clothes. It was, in short, the warfare of an inferior, knowing herself unpunishable, against an unfortunate superior. As housekeeper and lady's maid, Madeleine had served M. and Madame Camusot since their marriage. She had seen her employers in the penury of their early life in the provinces, when Monsieur Camusot had been Judge of the Tribunal at Alençon ; she had helped them to live when he was President of the Tribunal of Mantes. M. Camusot came to Paris in 1828, and was appointed *juge d'instruction.* She was thus too close to the family not to have some motives for revenge. This desire to play her proud and ambitious mistress the ill turn of becoming her master's cousin, covered one of those sullen hatreds engendered by the gravel which causes avalanches.

"Madame, here's your Monsieur Pons, spencer and all," cried Madeleine to the president's wife. "He might at least tell me by what process he has managed to keep it for the last twenty-five years!"

Hearing a man's step in the little salon which was between the large salon and her bedroom, Madame Camusot looked at her daughter and shrugged her shoulders.

"You always inform me with so much intelligence, Madeleine, that I have no time to decide on anything," said the president's wife.

"Madame, Jean is out, I was alone, Monsieur

Pons rang, I opened the door to him, and as he is almost like one of the household, I could not prevent him from following me; he is out there, taking off his spencer."

"My poor kitten," said the president's wife to her daughter, "we are caught! We shall have to dine at home. Come," she added, seeing the piteous face of her dear little kitten, "shall we get rid of him once for all?"

"O, the poor man," answered Mademoiselle Camusot, "deprive him of one of his dinners!"

The little salon here resounded with the fictitious coughing of a man who wishes to thus say "I hear you."

"Very well, let him come in," said Madame Camusot to Madeleine, shrugging her shoulders.

"You have come so early, cousin," said Cécile Camusot, with a little malicious air, "that you have surprised us just as my mother was going to dress."

Cousin Pons, who had not failed to see the movement of the shoulders of the president's wife, was so cruelly hit that he found no compliment ready, and was fain to content himself with this profound remark:

"You are always charming, my little cousin!"

Then turning toward the mother with a bow:

"Dear cousin," he added, "you will not, I am sure, blame me for coming a little earlier than usual. I bring you something which you did me the pleasure to ask for—"

And the luckless Pons, who literally sawed in two the president's wife and Cécile every time that he called them "cousin," drew from the side-pocket of his coat a ravishing little oblong box made of mahaleb wood and exquisitely carved.

"Ah, I had forgotten it," said the president's wife, drily.

Was not this exclamation atrocious! Was it not calculated to take away all the merit from the attention of the relative, whose only fault was that of being a poor relation?

"But," she resumed, "you are very good, my cousin. Do I owe you a great deal of money for this little trifle?"

This question caused the poor man an internal shudder. He had counted on paying off the score of his dinners by the offer of this jewel.

"I had hoped that you would permit me to offer it to you," said he, in a voice of some emotion.

"Well, well," replied Madame Camusot, "but between us, let us have no ceremony; we know each other well enough to wash our linen together. I know that you are not rich enough to make war at your own expense. Is it not already enough that you have taken the trouble to spend your time running about among the shops?"—

"You would not wish this fan at all, my dear cousin, if you should be obliged to pay the value of it," replied the poor man, much wounded, "for it is a masterpiece by Watteau, who painted both sides of it; but don't disturb yourself, my dear cousin, I

did not pay the hundredth part of the value of this work of art."

To say to a rich person "You are poor!" is like telling the Archbishop of Granada that his homilies are worthless. Madame de Marville was much too proud of the position of her husband, of the ownership of the estate of Marville, and of her invitations to the court balls, not to be touched to the quick by such a remark, especially coming from a miserable musician to whom she wished to stand in the attitude of a benefactress.

"They are then monstrously stupid, the people from whom you buy such things?"—she said, quickly.

"There are no stupid dealers known in Paris," replied Pons, almost drily.

"Then it is you who are very clever," said Cécile, to calm the debate.

"My little cousin, I have wit enough to know Lancret, Pater, Watteau, Greuze; but above all, I have the desire to please your dear mamma."

Ignorant and vain as she was, Madame de Marville did not wish to have the air of receiving the smallest gift from her poor relation, and her ignorance in this case served her admirably; she did not even know the name of Watteau. If anything can express the lengths to which the self-love of the collectors —which is certainly one of the keenest, for it rivals the self-love of an author—can go, it is the audacity with which Pons had just dared to make head against his cousin for the first time in twenty years.

Stupefied at his own courage, Pons subsided into a pacific state in explaining to Cécile the beauties of the delicate carving on the sticks of this marvelous fan. But to understand fully the secret of the sincere trepidation to which the poor man was a prey, it is necessary to give a slight sketch of the president's wife.

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At forty-six years of age, Madame de Marville, formerly petite, blonde, plump, and fresh, was still petite, but had now become withered. Her prominent forehead, her pinched mouth, which was adorned in youth in delicate tints, had changed her expression, naturally disdainful, and given her a sullen look. The habit of absolute control in her own house had given a hard and disagreeable expression to her countenance. The lapse of time had changed her blonde hair to a faded chestnut color. The eyes, still keen and caustic, revealed a judicial haughtiness embittered by a concealed envy. In fact, the president's wife found herself almost a poor woman in the midst of that society of bourgeois parvenus in which Pons was in the habit of dining. She could not forgive the rich druggist, former president of the Tribunal of Commerce, for having become successively Deputy Minister, Count, and Peer. She could not forgive her father-in-law for accepting, to the detriment of his eldest son, the appointment of deputy from his arrondissement, at the time when Popinot was raised to the peerage. After eighteen years of service in the courts of Paris, she waited still for Camusot's appointment to the place of Councillor to the Court of Cassation, from which, however, he was excluded by an incapacity well known at the Palais. The Minister of Justice in 1844

regretted the appointment of Camusot to the presidency, obtained in 1834; but he had been relegated to the Chamber of Indictments, where, thanks to his old experience as *juge d'instruction,* he rendered good service in deciding arrests. These mishaps, after wearing upon Madame de Marville—who, moreover, did not deceive herself as to the actual value of her husband—had rendered her really terrible. Her character, always aggressive, had become exasperating. Rather aging than old, she had made herself sharp and harsh, like a brush, in order to obtain through fear that which all the world seemed disposed to refuse her. Satirical to excess, she had but few friends. She was held in awe, but she surrounded herself with a number of devoted old friends of her own quality, who upheld her under peril of retaliation. Thus, the relations of poor Pons with this devil in petticoats, were like those of a scholar with the master who addressed him only with a ferule. The president's wife could not explain to herself the sudden boldness of her cousin; she was ignorant of the value of his gift.

"Where did you find this?" asked Cécile, examining the treasure.

"Rue de Lappe, at a second-hand dealer's, who had just got it from a château they have dismantled near Dreux, at Aulnay—a château in which Madame de Pompadour occasionally resided before she built Ménars; there have been saved from it the most splendid wainscotings known; they are so fine that Liénard, our celebrated carver in wood, has kept of

them, as the *ne plus ultra* of art, two oval panels for models.—Such treasures! My dealer found this fan in a *bonheur-du-jour* of marquetry, which I should have bought if I collected such things; but it was unattainable—a piece of furniture by Reisener is worth from three to four thousand francs! They are just beginning to recognize in Paris that the famous German and French workers in wood of the sixteenth, seventeenth, and eighteenth centuries have composed veritable pictures in wood. The merit of a collector is to be before the fashion. Why! five years hence, they will pay in Paris for the porcelains of Frankenthal, which I have been collecting for the last twenty years, twice as much as they do now for the pâte tendre of Sèvres."

"What is Frankenthal?" asked Cécile.

"It is the name of the manufactory of porcelains of the Elector-Palatine; it is older than our manufactory at Sèvres, just as the famous gardens of Heidelberg, ruined by Turenne, had the misfortune to exist before Versailles. Sèvres has copied a great deal from Frankenthal.—The Germans, we must give them this credit, made, before we did, admirable things in Saxony and in the Palatinate."

The mother and daughter looked at each other as if Pons were speaking to them in Chinese, for it is difficult to imagine how ignorant and limited are the Parisians; they only know what they are told, though they may wish to learn.

"How do you know Frankenthal when you see it?"

"Why, by the signature," cried Pons enthusiastically. "All these ravishing masterpieces are signed. The Frankenthal bears a C and a T —Charles Théodore—interlaced and surmounted by a prince's coronet. The old Dresden has two swords and the number of its class in gold. Vincennes signs with a horn. Vienna has a V closed and barred. Berlin has two bars. Mayence has the wheel. Sèvres, the two LL's; and the porcelain of the queen, an A, meaning Antoinette, surmounted by the royal crown. In the eighteenth century all the sovereigns of Europe were rivals in the manufacture of porcelains. They enticed away each other's workmen. Watteau designed dinner services for the manufactory at Dresden, and his works have reached insane prices.—It is necessary to be very well acquainted with them, because to-day Dresden repeats and recopies them.—Ah! in those days they made admirable things, such as they will never make again."—

"Ah! bah!"

"Yes, cousin, they can never make again certain marquetries, certain porcelains, just as they can never make again Raphaels, Titians, nor Rembrandts, nor Van Eycks, nor Cranachs!—Why, the Chinese are wonderfully skilful, wonderfully clever, and yet to-day they are recopying the fine specimens of their old porcelains, called Grand Mandarins. Why, two vases of old Grand Mandarins, of the largest size, are worth six, eight, ten thousand francs, and you can get the modern copies for two hundred francs!"

"You are joking."

"Cousin, these prices astonish you, and yet they are nothing. A full dinner service for twelve persons, in pâte tendre of Sèvres, which is not porcelain, is worth a hundred thousand francs, and that, moreover, is the actual cost of its manufacture. A service of that kind was sold at Sèvres, in 1750, for fifty thousand livres. I have seen the original bill of sale."

"To come back to this fan," said Cécile, to whom that treasure seemed much too old.

"You will understand that I began to hunt for it as soon as your dear mamma did me the honor to request a fan," replied Pons. "I looked through all the shops of Paris without finding anything worthy; for, for the dear Madame President, I wished a masterpiece, and I thought of presenting to her the fan of Marie Antoinette, the most beautiful of all the celebrated fans, but yesterday I was dazzled by this divine chef-d'œuvre, which Louis XV. himself had certainly ordered. Why did I go to seek a fan in the Rue de Lappe, in the shop of an Auvergnat, who sells brasses, and iron work, and gilded furniture? Well, I believe in the intelligence of objets d'art; they know their connoisseurs, they call them, they say 'Zit, Zit!' "—

The president's wife shrugged her shoulders, glancing at her daughter without Pons being able to perceive this rapid movement.

"I know them all, those grabbers! 'What have you new, Papa Monistrol? Have you any panels

for doors?' I asked this trader, who always lets me look over his things before he shows them to the large dealers. To this question, Monistrol recounted to me how Liénard, who was carving in the chapel at Dreux some very beautiful things for the civil list, had rescued at the sale at Aulnay all the carved woodwork, from the hands of the Parisian dealers, while they were occupied with the porcelains and the inlaid furniture. 'I have nothing very great,' said he to me, 'but I could pay for my journey with that,' and he showed me the *bonheur-du-jour*, a marvel! It was from designs by Boucher, executed in marquetry, with such art!—You wanted to go down on your knees before it! 'You see, monsieur,' he said, 'I have just found in a locked drawer, of which the key was lost, and which I broke open, this fan! You can very well tell me to whom I shall sell it.'—And he drew out for me this little box in mahabel wood, carved. 'See, it is that sort of Pompadour which resembles the flowery Gothic.'—'Oh,' I replied to him, 'the box is pretty. It may come to me—the box. As to the fan, my old Monistrol, I have no Madame Pons to whom to give this old treasure; besides, they now make new ones, mighty pretty. They paint to-day this vellum miraculously and cheaply enough. Do you know that there are two thousand painters in Paris?' And I unfolded carelessly the fan, concealing my admiration, looking coldly at the two little paintings of a freedom and execution that is ravishing. I held in my hand the fan of Madame de Pompadour! Watteau

exterminated himself to compose this! 'How much do you want for the whole piece of furniture?'—'Oh, one thousand francs; I have been offered that already.' I named a price for the fan which corresponded to the probable expenses of his journey. We looked at each other then, in the whites of our eyes, and I saw that I had my man. Then I put the fan back into its box, so that the Auvergnat would not take to examining it closely, and I went into ecstacies over the workmanship of this box, which is certainly a gem. 'If I buy it,' said I to Monistrol, 'it is because of that; you see it is only the box which tempts me. As to your *bonheur-du-jour,* you can get more than one thousand francs for that. See there, how those brasses are chiseled! They are models—you can make a great thing of that—it has not been reproduced, it was made *unique* for Madame de Pompadour'—and my man, all on fire for his *bonheur-du-jour,* forgot the fan; he let me have it for nothing, in return for the revelation I had made him of the beauty of this piece of furniture of Reisener. There it is! But it requires plenty of practice to be able to drive such bargains as that! It is a combat of eye to eye, and where is there an eye like that of the Jew or an Auvergnat!"

The admirable pantomime, the spirit of the old artist, which made of him, recounting the triumph of his genius over the ignorance of the dealer, a model worthy of a Dutch painter, were all lost upon the president's wife and her daughter, who exchanged between them a cold and disdainful glance which meant:

"What an original!"—

"That sort of thing amuses you, then?" asked the president's wife.

Pons, chilled by this question, experienced a lively desire to beat the president's wife.

"Why, my dear cousin," he said, "it is the chase after masterpieces! You find yourself face to face with adversaries who defend the game! It is ruse for ruse! A chef-d'œuvre in the hands of a Norman, a Jew, or an Auvergnat—why, its like a princess guarded by magicians, in the fairy stories!"

"How do you know it is Wat—what did you call him?"

"Watteau, my dear cousin, one of the greatest French painters of the eighteenth century. Here, don't you see the signature!" said he, in showing her one of the pastorals which represented a round danced by fictitious shepherdesses and by shepherd grand seigneurs. "What swing! What spirit! What color! And how it's done! All with one stroke! like the flourish of a writing master; you do not feel the work in it! And on the other side, see! a ball in a salon! It is the winter and the summer! And what ornaments! and how well preserved! You see, the ferrule is in gold, and it is finished on each side by a little bit of a ruby, which I have cleaned!"

"If that is so, cousin, I really cannot accept from you a gift of so much value. It would be much better for you to invest the money in government bonds," said the president's wife, who would

nevertheless have liked nothing better than to keep this magnificent fan.

"It is high time that that which has served vice should fall into the hands of virtue!" said the worthy man, recovering his self-possession. "It has taken one hundred years to bring about this miracle. You may be sure that at the ancient court no princess had anything comparable with this chef-d'œuvre; for it is unfortunately in human nature to do more for a Pompadour than for a virtuous queen!"

"Very well, I accept it," said Madame de Marville, laughing.—"Cécile, my little angel, go, will you, with Madeleine to see that the dinner is worthy of our cousin?"—

The president's wife wished to square the account. This message, spoken aloud, contrary to the rules of good breeding, resembled so much the receipt for a payment, that Pons blushed like a young girl detected in a fault. The gravel this time was a little too coarse, and it rolled about for some time in his unfortunate heart. Cécile, a very reddish young person, infected with pedantry, imitated the judicial gravity of her father, and feeling the dryness of her mother, disappeared, leaving the poor Pons alone with the terrible president's wife.

"She is very sweet, my little Lili," said Madame de Marville, using the childish abbreviation formerly given to the name of Cécile.

"Charming," replied the old musician, twirling his thumbs.

"I cannot understand the times in which we

live," resumed the president's wife. "Of what use is it to have had for father a president of the Cour Royale of Paris, and a Commander of the Legion of Honor; for grandfather, a millionaire deputy, a future peer of France, and the richest of all the wholesale silk merchants?"

The devotion of the president to the new dynasty had recently secured for him the Ribbon of a Commander of the Legion of Honor, a favor, attributed by some certain envious ones, to the friendship which allied him with Popinot. That minister, in spite of his natural modesty, had allowed himself, as we have seen, to be made a count. "For the sake of my son," he would say to his numerous friends.

"It is only the money that one wants nowadays," replied Cousin Pons; "none but the rich are respected, and—"

"What might not have happened," cried the president's wife, "if Heaven had left me my poor little Charles!"—

"Oh, with two children you would have been poor," replied the cousin. "This is the result of the equal division of property; but do not worry, my beautiful cousin. Cécile will certainly end by making a good marriage. I do not see anywhere a young girl as accomplished as she."

Thus you may see how Pons debased his soul before his amphitryons; he repeated their ideas, and he uttered platitudes upon them after the fashion of a Greek chorus. He dared not surrender himself to

that originality which distinguishes the true artist, and which in his youth had been abundant in him, but the habit of effacing himself had by this time nearly destroyed it, and it was suppressed whenever, as at this moment, it gave signs of reappearance.

"But I was married with twenty thousand francs of dot only—"

"Ah, in 1819, my cousin," interrupted Pons. "And besides, it was you, a woman of intelligence, a young girl under the protection of the king, Louis XVIII!"

"But all the same, my daughter is an angel of perfection, of wit; she is full of heart, she will have one hundred thousand francs in marriage, without counting her expectations, and here she is still on our hands—"

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Madame de Marville continued to talk of her daughter and of herself during the next twenty minutes, delivering the same complaints peculiar to mothers who are under the power of marriageable daughters. During the last twenty years in which the old musician had been in the habit of dining with his only cousin Camusot, the poor man had never heard a word of his personal affairs, or of his life, or of his health. Pons was, moreover, a species of receptacle for all domestic confidences; his well-known and necessary discretion offered the strongest security, for a single indiscreet word from him would have closed in his face the doors of ten houses. His vocation of listener was, therefore, accompanied by a constant approbation; he smiled at everything, he accused and he defended no one; for him everybody was right. Thus, in short, he could no longer be reckoned as a man—he was only a stomach! In the course of her long tirade, the president's wife admitted, though not without some precaution, to her cousin, that she was disposed to accept for her daughter, almost blindly, any proposals that might present themselves. She even went so far as to say that she should consider a man of forty-eight years of age a good match, provided he had twenty thousand francs of income.

"Cécile is in her twenty-third year, and if she

should be so unlucky as to reach twenty-five or twenty-six, it would be excessively difficult to marry her. The world asks why a young girl 'hangs fire' so long. Already people in our society are talking a great deal too much of this situation. We have exhausted all the commonplace reasons—'She is still young—She loves her parents too much to leave them—She is happy in her own home—She is difficult to please—She wishes a distinguished name.'—We are getting ridiculous, I am well aware of it. Besides, Cécile herself is weary of waiting; she suffers, poor little thing."—

"But of what?" asked Pons foolishly.

"Why," replied the mother in the tone of a duenna, "she is humiliated by seeing all her friends married before her."

"My dear cousin, what is it that has happened since I last had the pleasure of dining here, that you should be thinking of a man of forty-eight years of age?" asked the poor musician humbly.

"This has happened," answered the president's wife. "We were to have had an interview with a councillor of the court, who has a son of thirty years of age and whose fortune is considerable, and for whom M. de Marville would have obtained, through the financial administration, a post as referee in the Cour des Comptes. The young man is already there as a supernumerary. And they now say to us that this young man has had the folly to go off to Italy in the train of a duchess of the Bal Mabille.—It is a disguised refusal. They do not

want to give us a young man whose mother is dead and who enjoys already an income of thirty thousand francs, while waiting for his father's fortune. So you must pardon our ill-humor, dear cousin; you have come in just at our crisis."

While Pons was trying to find one of those complimentary replies which invariably came to him too late, in presence of the amphitryon of whom he stood in awe, Madeleine entered, handed a note to Madame de Marville, and waited for a reply. The message was as follows:—

"Let us pretend, dear mamma, that this word has been sent to us from the Palais by my father, and that he tells you to bring me to dine with his friend and renew the offer of my marriage. The cousin may then go away, and we can follow out our plans at the Popinots."

"How did your master send this note?" asked Madame de Marville, quickly.

"By a messenger from the Palais," boldly answered the withered Madeleine.

By this reply, the old waiting woman indicated to her mistress that she had got up this plot in concert with the impatient Cécile.

"Say that my daughter and I will be there at half-past five."

As soon as Madeleine disappeared, the president's wife looked at the cousin Pons with that sham friendship which produces on the sensitive soul the

effect that vinegar and milk mixed together produce on the tongue of an epicure.

"My dear cousin, the dinner is ordered; you must eat it without us, for my husband writes to me from the court room to say that the project of the marriage is still considered by the councillor, and we are to dine there to-day.—You understand that there is no ceremony between us. Make yourself here entirely at home. You see the frankness with which I treat you; I have no secrets—you would not wish to interfere with the marriage of this little angel?"

"I, my dear cousin, on the contrary I should like nothing better than to find her a husband; but in the circle I visit—"

"Yes, it is not very probable," interrupted the president's wife, impolitely. "Well, then, you will stay? Cécile will keep you company while I dress."

"Oh, cousin, I can go and dine elsewhere," said the poor man.

Although cruelly affected by the manner in which the president's wife had made him feel his indigence, he was still more appalled by the prospect of being left alone with the servants.

"But why?—The dinner is ready; the servants will eat it."

When he heard this horrible speech, Pons started up erect, as though the knob of a galvanic battery had touched him, bowed coldly to his cousin, and went to put on his spencer. The door of Cécile's bedroom, which opened into the salon, was ajar, so

that as he glanced before him into a mirror, Pons perceived the young girl in fits of laughter, signaling to her mother by means of her head and by pantomimic gestures which revealed some base mystification to the old artist. He went slowly down the staircase, with difficulty restraining his tears; he saw himself driven out of this house without knowing why.

"I am too old nowadays," he said to himself, "the world holds in horror old age and poverty, two hideous things. I will never dine anywhere again without an invitation."

Heroic words!—

The door of the kitchen, which was on the ground floor and faced the lodge, was open, as it frequently is in houses that are occupied by their owners, and where the porte cochère is always closed. Pons could therefore hear the laughter of the cook and the valet de chambre, to whom Madeleine was relating the trick just played upon him, for she did not suppose that the worthy man would evacuate the place so promptly. The valet de chambre approved highly of this pleasantry directed against a habitué of the house who, as he said, never gave anything but a little crown for the New Year's gifts!

"Oh, but if he take offense and never come back," remarked the cook, "we will have three francs less for all of us on New Year's day."

"Well, how should he hear of it?" said the valet de chambre, in reply.

"Bah!" cried Madeleine, "a little sooner, a little

later, what does it matter? He bores so much the masters of all the houses where he dines that before long they will all turn him out."

At this moment the old musician called: "The door, if you please," to the concierge, so that she might open it. This dolorous cry was received with profound silence in the kitchen.

"He heard," said the valet de chambre.

"Oh, well! so much the worse, or rather so much the better," replied Madeleine; "he's a dead rat."

The poor man, who had not lost a syllable of this kitchen talk, heard even these last words. He returned home along the boulevards in the condition of an old woman who has had a desperate struggle with assassins. He walked, talking to himself, with a convulsive swiftness, for his bleeding honor pushed him along like a straw before a furious wind. At last he found himself on the Boulevard du Temple at five o'clock, without knowing in the least how he got there; but, extraordinary to relate, he did not feel the least appetite.

Now, in order to comprehend the revolution which the return of Pons at this hour was about to produce in his own house, the explanation heretofore promised as to Madame Cibot, must now be given.

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The Rue de Normandie is one of those streets in which you might think yourself in the provinces; grass flourishes there, and a passer-by is an event, and all the inhabitants know each other. The houses date from the period when, under Henry IV., a quarter was laid out in which each street was to bear the name of a province, and in the centre of which a fine square was to be dedicated to France herself. The idea of the Quartier de l'Europe was a repetition of this plan. The world repeats itself in everything, everywhere, even in theory. The house in which the two musicians dwelt was an ancient hotel between court and garden; but the front on the street had been built at a time during the last century when the Marais had been the extreme of fashion. The two friends occupied the whole of the second floor of the ancient hotel. This double house belonged to M. Pillerault, an octogenarian, who had left the management of it to M. and Madame Cibot, as door-keepers, for the last twenty-six years. Now, as the emoluments of a door-keeper of the Marais are not sufficient to enable him to live by the profits of his occupation, the Sieur Cibot added to his tithe of a sou per franc, and his billet levied upon each load of wood, the income from his personal industries; he was a tailor, like many another concierge. In course of time, Cibot had ceased to

work for the master tailors; for, in consequence of the confidence reposed in him by the smaller bourgeois of the quarter, he enjoyed a monopoly of repairs, darns, renovations as good as new, of the garments within a perimeter of three streets. His lodge was large and airy; it adjoined a bedroom. Thus the Cibot household was considered as one of the most fortunate among Messieurs the concierges of the arrondissement.

Cibot, a little stunted man, grown olive-colored by dint of sitting forever cross-legged, like a Turk, on a table raised to the level of a barred window looking on the street, earned by his trade about forty sous a day. He worked still, although he was fifty-eight years of age; but fifty-eight, that is the fine age for concierges; by that time they have become fitted into their lodgings, the lodge has become for them that which the shell is for the oyster, and *they are known in the quarter!*

Madame Cibot, formerly a handsome oyster-woman, had left her stand at the *Cadran Bleu*, for love of Cibot, at the age of twenty-eight, after all the adventures which a beautiful oyster-seller encounters without seeking them. The beauty of the women of the people seldom lasts long, especially when they are trained, like a wall fruit, at the door of a restaurant. The scorching blaze of the kitchen reflected on their features hardens them; the remnants of the bottles, drunk in company with the waiters, filters through their complexions, and no flower ripens more quickly than that of the handsome

oyster-woman. Luckily for Madame Cibot, legitimate marriage and the life of a concierge came in time to preserve her; she remained like a model of Rubens, keeping her vigorous beauty, which her rivals of the Rue de Normandie calumniated in qualifying as puffy. Her flesh tints might be compared to those appetizing mounds of the butter of Isigny to be seen in the markets; and yet, notwithstanding her corpulence, she displayed an incomparable agility in the exercise of her functions. Madame Cibot had attained the age when this style of women are obliged to resort to the razor. Is not that the same as saying that she was forty-eight years of age? A female door-keeper with a moustache is one of the greatest guarantees of security and order that a proprietor can have. If Delacroix could have seen Madame Cibot posing proudly on her broom, certainly he would have made of her a Bellona!

The position of the Cibot couple, to speak in legal manner, was destined strangely enough to affect one day that of the two friends; thus the historian, if he would be faithful, is obliged to enter into some details on this subject of their lodge. The house brought a rental of about eight thousand francs, for it had three suites of apartments, double in depth, upon the street, and three in the ancient hotel between the court and the garden. In addition to these, a trader in old iron, named Rémonencq, occupied a shop on the street. This Rémonencq, who had developed within a few months into the dignity of a

merchant of curiosities, was so well acquainted with the bric-à-brac value of Pons that he always bowed to him from the depths of his shop, whenever the musician entered or went out. Thus the sou per franc brought about four hundred francs a year to the Cibot household, which moreover got its lodging and firewood for nothing. Now, as the earnings of the husband amounted to about seven hundred or eight hundred francs a year on an average, the couple made up, counting their New Year's gratuities, an income of sixteen hundred francs, all of which they spent, for they lived better than the majority of the common people. "You only live once," said Madame Cibot. Born during the revolution, she was ignorant, as you see, of the catechism.

Through her former relations with the *Cadran Bleu*, this belle concierge, with proud and orange-colored eyes, had preserved certain culinary accomplishments which rendered her husband an object of envy for all his associates. Thus it happened that at their present ripe maturity, on the threshold of old age, the Cibots found themselves with not a hundred francs of savings. Well-clothed, well nourished, they enjoyed throughout the quarter the consideration due to twenty-six years of strict probity. If they owned no property, at least they "owed to no one not a centime," according to their own expression, for Madame Cibot was prodigal of negatives in her conversation. She said to her husband, "Thou art not no fool!" Why? You might as well demand the reason of her indifference

in matters of religion. Proud, both of them, of their honest lives, open to the daylight, of the esteem in which they were held by six or seven streets, and of the autocratic power which their *proprietor* allowed them to exercise in the house, they yet groaned in secret at having no invested means. Cibot complained of twinges in his hands and legs, and Madame Cibot deplored the fact that her poor Cibot was compelled to work at his age. The day will come when after thirty years of such a life, a concierge will accuse the government of injustice and demand that he be given the decoration of the Legion of Honor! Every time that the gossips of the quarter learned that such and such a servant, after eight or ten years of service, had retired with a little legacy of three or four hundred francs annuity, there circulated from lodge to lodge such complaints as might give an idea of the jealousy with which are devoured all the inferior professions in Paris.

"There now! It will never happen to any of us poor devils to get mentioned in a will! We have no luck! We are more useful than a servant, however, any day. We are people of responsibility, we make out the receipts, we watch over the property, but we are treated like dogs, neither more nor less!"

"There is nothing but work and bad luck," said Cibot, mending a coat.

"If I had left Cibot to his lodge and gone as a cook, we would have had thirty thousand francs invested by this time," cried Madame Cibot, gossiping

with her neighbors, with her hands on her big hips. "I have not taken life right,—talk about being lodged and warmed inside a good home and wanting for nothing!"

When in 1836 the two friends came to occupy the second floor of the ancient hotel, they occasioned a sort of revolution in the Cibot household. In this way. Schmucke had, as also his friend Pons, the custom of employing the door-keepers, male and female, of the houses in which he lodged, to take charge of his rooms. The two musicians were therefore of the same mind, when they installed themselves in the Rue de Normandie, to make an arrangement with Madame Cibot, who became their housekeeper for the consideration of twenty-five francs a month, twelve francs and fifty centimes for each. At the end of the year this portress emerita reigned over the household of the two old bachelors, just as she reigned over the establishment of M. Pillerault, the great-uncle of Madame la Comtesse Popinot; their affairs were her affairs, and she said: "My two gentlemen." Finally, finding the two Nut-crackers mild as sheep, easy to live with, not in the least suspicious, perfect children, she gradually grew, with her heart of a woman of the people, into the habit of protecting them, of adoring them, of serving them, with so veritable a devotion that she delivered to them occasional lectures and defended them against the many frauds which combine in Paris to swell the expenses of the household. For twenty-five francs a month the

two bachelors, without premeditation and without being aware of it, had acquired a mother. As they grew to perceive Madame Cibot's real value, the two musicians artlessly presented her with little eulogiums, with thanks, with small gifts, which drew still closer the bonds of this domestic alliance. Madame Cibot would rather a thousand times be appreciated at her just value than paid; a sentiment which, be it understood, always amplifies wages. Cibot executed for half price, the errands, the mendings, everything which concerned the service of his wife's two old gentlemen.

Finally, in the second year, a new element of mutual friendship was developed in the close relation between the second floor and the porter's lodge. Schmucke concluded a bargain with Madame Cibot which satisfied at once his own indolence and his desire to live without bothering himself with anything. For the sum of thirty sous a day, or forty-five francs a month, Madame Cibot took upon herself to supply him with breakfast and dinner. Pons, finding his friend's breakfast very satisfactory, made a like bargain for his own breakfast at eighteen francs a month. This system of supplies, which threw about ninety francs a month into the receipts of the lodge, made of the two lodgers inviolate beings, angels, cherubim, divinities. It is exceedingly doubtful if the king of the French, with all his experience in these matters, was as well served as were the two Nut-crackers. For them the milk came pure from the can; they read gratuitously the

newspapers of the first and third floors, whose tenants rose late and who could be told, if necessary, that their journals had not yet come. Madame Cibot, moreover, kept the apartment, the clothes, the landing, everything, in a state of cleanliness worthy of the Flemings. Schmucke, for his part, enjoyed a happiness for which he had never dared to hope; Madame Cibot made life easy for him. He gave about six francs a month for his washing, of which she took charge, as well as of all his mending. He expended fifteen francs a month for tobacco. These three items of expense formed a monthly total of sixty-six francs, which, multiplied by twelve, gives seven hundred and ninety-two francs. Add two hundred and twenty francs for rent and extras, and you have a thousand and twelve francs. Cibot made Schmucke's clothes, and the average of this expense amounted to about one hundred and fifty francs. This profound philosopher, then, lived at a cost of twelve hundred francs a year. How many people in Europe whose sole desire is to come and live at Paris, will be agreeably surprised to learn that you can be happy there with twelve hundred francs of income, in the Rue de Normandie, in the Marais, under the protection of Madame Cibot!

Madame Cibot was stupefied in seeing the good Pons come home at five o'clock in the afternoon. Not only had such a thing never happened before, but her "Monsieur" did not even see her, and did not bow to her.

"Ah, well, Cibot!" she said to her husband, "Monsieur Pons is either a millionaire or crazy!"

"It looks like it," replied Cibot, letting fall the sleeve of a coat in which he was making, to use the slang of tailors, a *poignard*.

At the moment when Pons mechanically re-entered his house, Madame Cibot was just finishing the dinner of Schmucke. This dinner consisted of a certain ragout, of which the odor was diffused throughout the whole courtyard. It was made of the remnants of boiled beef, bought at a cook-shop, not to say a chandler's, and fricasseed in butter with onions cut in fine strips until the butter was wholly absorbed by the meat and the onions, so that this delicacy of the concierge presented the appearance of something fried. This dish, lovingly concocted for Cibot and Schmucke, between whom Madame Cibot divided it equally, accompanied by a bottle of beer and a bit of cheese, sufficed the old German music-master for his dinner. And you may well believe that Solomon in all his glory did not dine better than did Schmucke. Sometimes this dish of boiled meat fricasseed with onions, sometimes the remnants of chicken sauté, sometimes cold beef with parsley and a fish cooked with a sauce invented by Madame Cibot, in which a mother might have eaten her own child without perceiving it, sometimes a dish of venison, according to the quality or quantity sold second-hand from the restaurants of the boulevard to the cook-shops of the Rue Boucherat; such was Schmucke's bill of fare, who was well

contented to accept, without any remarks, all that was served to him by his *goot Montame Zipod*. And from day to day the good Madame Cibot had lessened the fare until she managed to supply it at a cost to herself of twenty sous.

"I am going up to see if nothing hasn't happened to him, that poor, dear man," said Madame Cibot to her spouse; "here's Mr. Schmucke's dinner done to a turn."

Madame Cibot covered the earthenware dish with a common china plate, and then, in spite of her age, she arrived at the apartment of the two friends just at the moment when Schmucke opened the door to Pons.

"Vat ees de madder, my goot frent?" asked the German, frightened by the collapse visible in Pons' face.

"I will tell you all; but I have come to dine with you—"

"To tine! to tine!" cried Schmucke, enchanted, delighted. "Pud dad ees imbossible!" he added, remembering the gastronomic habits of his friend.

At this moment the old German perceived Madame Cibot, who was listening, according to her legitimate rights as housekeeper. Seized by one of those inspirations which only blossom in the heart of a true friend, he went straight to her and drew her out upon the landing.

"Montame Zipod, der goot Bons lofes goot dings to eat; go to der Catran Pleu und order a nice leetle

fine tinner; anchofies, magaroni, in vact a rebast of Lugullus."

"A repast of what?" demanded Madame Cibot.

"Vy," replied Schmucke, "it ees a frigandeau of feal, a goot feesh, a pottle of fine Porteaux, and someding of everyding dat ees der best—like rice groqueetes, some smoked bagon! Bay for it! Don't zay a vort! I vill geef you der money for it domorrow morning."

Schmucke re-entered with a joyous air, rubbing his hands; but his face resumed gradually an expression of stupefaction as he listened to the recital of the misfortunes that had suddenly overwhelmed the heart of his friend. He endeavored to console Pons by depicting to him the world from his own point of view. Paris was a perpetual tornado, men and women were whirled about in it in the mazes of a furious waltz, and it was never worth while to expect anything from the world, which only looks at the surface and *nefer ad de inderior,* he said. He related for the hundredth time how, from year to year, the only three pupils whom he loved, by whom he was cherished, for whom he would have given his life, and from whom he even received a little pension of nine hundred francs, to which each contributed equally, had so completely forgotten, year after year, to come and see him, were so violently carried away by the current of Parisian life, that he had not been received by them when he called, for more than three years.—It is true that Schmucke presented himself at the houses

of these great ladies at ten o'clock in the morning.—And, finally, the quarterly installments of his pension were paid him by a notary.

"And yet," he added, "dey are hearts of gold. Dey are my leetle Zaint Zezilias, sharming laties—Montame de Bordentuère, Montame de Fantenesse, Montame ti Dilet. Ven I zee dem, it ees in der Jambs-Élusées, vidout dair seeing me—ant dey lofe me mooch, ant I can go ant tine mit dem, ant dey vill pe vell pleaset; put I much prefair to pe mit my frent Bons, pegause I gan zee heem venefer I vant to, efery tay."

Pons took the hand of Schmucke between his own, and grasped it with a movement in which his whole soul was communicated, and they both remained thus for some minutes, like two lovers who meet again after long absence.

"Tine mit me here, efery tay!" resumed Schmucke, who was inwardly blessing the cruelty of the president's wife. "Zee, ve vill prig-a-prag togedder; and der tefil shall nefare get hees dail insite our toors."

To explain these truly heroic words, "Ve vill prig-a-prag togedder," it must be admitted that Schmucke was in a state of crass ignorance as to bric-à-bracology. It required nothing less than the whole strength of his friendship to keep him from breaking things in the salon, and in the apartment given up to Pons for a museum. Schmucke, wholly devoted to music, a composer for his own happiness, looked upon all the little follies of his friend as a fish

which had received a ticket of invitation would regard a flower show at the Luxembourg. He respected these marvelous works of art solely because of the respect which Pons manifested in dusting his treasures. He replied, "Yes, dat is ferry breddy," to the admiration of his friend, as a mother replies with unmeaning phrases to the gestures of a child that cannot yet talk. Since the two friends had lived together, Schmucke had seen Pons change his clock seven times, always in bartering an inferior one for a better one. Pons was now the owner of a most magnificent clock by Boulle, a clock in ebony, inlaid with brass, and adorned with carvings in the first manner of Boulle. Boulle had two styles, just as Raphaël had three. In the first he wedded brass to ebony, and in the second, against his convictions, he sacrificed to tortoise-shell. He produced prodigies solely to vanquish his competitors, inventors of the tortoise-shell inlay. Notwithstanding the learned demonstration of Pons, Schmucke was not able to see the slightest difference between the magnificent clock in the first manner of Boulle and the six others. But because they made his friend happy, Schmucke took even more care of these "knick-knacks" than his friend himself. It is not surprising, then, that the sublime phrase of Schmucke had the power to calm the distress of Pons, for the "ve vill prig-a-prag togedder" of the German meant: "I will put money in the bric-à-brac if you will dine here."

"Dinner is ready, gentlemen," said Madame Cibot, with an astonishing composure.

The surprise of Pons at seeing and tasting the dinner due to the friendship of Schmucke may be readily understood. These sensations, so rare in life, do not come from the steady devotion which makes two men say to each other perpetually, "You have in me another self,"— for to that they grow accustomed; no, they are caused by the comparison of such proofs of the happiness of domestic intimacy with the brutal selfishness of worldly life. It is such experience of the world which ceaselessly links anew two friends or two lovers when two true souls are wedded, either by love or by friendship. Thus Pons wiped away two big tears, and Schmucke for his part was obliged to dry his moist eyes. They said nothing to each other, but they loved each other all the more, and they made to each other little motions of the head, whose balmy expressions soothed the anguish of the gravel introduced by the president's wife into the heart of Pons. Schmucke rubbed his hands till the skin was in danger, for he had suddenly conceived one of those inventions which only astonish a German when they are suddenly developed in his brain, congealed as it usually is by the respect due sovereign princes.

"My goot Bons," he said.

"I guess what you want. You wish that we should dine together every day—"

"I vish dat I vas reech enuf to tine like dat efery tay," replied sadly the good German.

Madame Cibot, to whom Pons gave occasionally tickets for the theatre of the boulevard, which

PONS, SCHMUCKE AND THE CIBOT

In hearing this promise, Schmucke jumped from one end of the table to the other, dragging with him the cloth, the plates, the water-bottles, and seized Pons in an embrace comparable to that of one gas rushing to mix itself with another gas for which it has an affinity.

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elevated him to the same level in her heart as that of her boarder Schmucke, here made a proposition, which was as follows:

"My goodness," said she, "for three francs, without wine, I can give you every day, you two, such a dinner that you will lick the plates and make them as clean as if they had been washed."

"De fagt ees," replied Schmucke, "dat I tine pedder mit dat vich Montame Zipod gooks for me, dan to de gentry who eat de king's dishes."—

In the fervor of his new hope, the respectful German went so far as to imitate the irreverence of the minor newspapers in calumniating the fare, at so much a head, at the royal table.

"Truly?" said Pons. "Well, then, I will try it to-morrow!"

In hearing this promise, Schmucke jumped from one end of the table to the other, dragging with him the cloth, the plates, the water-bottles, and seized Pons in an embrace comparable to that of one gas rushing to mix itself with another gas for which it has an affinity.

"Vat habbiness!" he cried.

"Monsieur will dine here every day!" said Madame Cibot, proudly and tenderly.

Unaware of the circumstances to which she owed the accomplishment of her dream, the excellent woman descended to her lodge, and entered it as Josépha comes upon the scene in "William Tell." She threw down the plates and dishes, and cried:

"Cibot, run and get two demi-tasses at the Café Turc, and tell the waiter in the kitchen they are for me."

Then she sat down, putting her hands upon her sturdy knees, and looking through the window at the opposite wall, said:

"I will go this evening and consult Mame Fontaine!"

Madame Fontaine was the fortune-teller of all the cooks, waiting-maids, lackeys, porters, etc., in the Marais.

"Since those two gentlemen came to live with us, we have put two thousand francs in the savings bank. In eight years, what luck! I wonder if it would not be better to earn nothing out of the dinner of Monsieur Pons, and make him stick to the house? Mame Fontaine's hen will tell me that."

In seeing no signs of heirs, neither for Pons nor for Schmucke, for the last three years Madame Cibot had been flattering herself with the hope of obtaining a mention in the wills of "her gentlemen," and her zeal, which up to that time had been full of integrity, redoubled under the influence of this cupidity, developed in the middle of her mustachios, thus late in life. By dining out every day, Pons had escaped the complete servitude in which the concierge wished to hold her gentlemen. The nomadic life of this old troubadour-collector had hitherto scared the vague ideas of seduction which danced in the brain of Madame Cibot, and which developed into a formidable plan from the day of this memorable

dinner. A quarter of an hour later she reappeared in the dining-room, armed with two cups of excellent coffee, flanked by two *petits verres* of Kirschwasser.

"Long lif Montame Zipod!" cried Schmucke. "She has guesset choost vat ve vanted."

After a few lamentations from the disappointed diner-out, which Schmucke combated with such wheedlings as the sitting pigeon would lavish on the traveler pigeon, the two friends went out together. Schmucke was unwilling to leave his friend to himself in the situation into which he had been thrown by the conduct of the masters and servants in the house of Camusot. He knew Pons, and he was sure that horribly sad reflections were likely to seize him at the orchestra on his magisterial seat, and to destroy the good effect of his home-coming to the nest. In bringing Pons back to the lodging that evening toward midnight, Schmucke held him by the arm, and, like a lover escorting an adored mistress, he pointed out to him the spots where the pavement ended or where it commenced; he warned him of all the gutters; he would have had the pavements in cotton, the sky blue, and the angels warbling in Pons' ear the music which they sang in his own. He had conquered the last province which was not already his own in his friend's heart!

*

For nearly three months, Pons dined every day with Schmucke. In the first place he was obliged to retrench eighty francs a month from his purchases, for he required about thirty-five francs' worth of wine, with the forty-five francs that the dinner cost him. Then, notwithstanding all the care and the Teutonic jests of Schmucke, the old artist regretted the exquisite dishes, the little glasses of liqueur, the good coffee, the chat, the empty civilities, the guests, and the gossip of the houses in which he had formerly dined. Habits which have endured for thirty-six years are not easily broken in the decline of life. Wine at a hundred and thirty francs per cask furnishes a poor liquid in the glass of an epicure; and, thus, each time that Pons carried his glass to his lips he recalled with a thousand poignant regrets, the exquisite wines of his amphitryons. So that at the end of three months the sharp sufferings which had almost broken his sensitive heart, were weakened, and he remembered only the pleasures of society; just as an old ladies' man regrets a mistress whom he has abandoned for her many infidelities! Although he endeavored to hide the profound melancholy which consumed him, the old musician could be seen to be evidently a prey to one of those inexplicable diseases whose seat is

in the moral being. To explain this nostalgia produced by a broken habit, it will suffice to indicate one of those thousand little nothings which, like the rings of a coat of mail, cover the soul with a network of iron. One of the keenest pleasures in the former life of Pons, one of the happinesses of the former diner-out, had been the *surprise*, the gastronomic impression produced by some extraordinary dish, some delicacy added triumphantly by the mistress of the bourgeois house who wished to give a festal air to her dinner! This delight of the stomach was now lacking to Pons, for Madame Cibot always took pains to inform him of the bill of fare through pride. The periodic piquancy of the daily life of Pons had totally disappeared. His dinner passed off without the unexpectedness of that which formerly in the house of our ancestors was known as "the covered dish." This is what Schmucke was, naturally, unable to comprehend. Pons was too delicate to complain, and if there is something even more distressing than misunderstood genius, it is a stomach uncomprehended. The heart whose love is repulsed, this drama of which we hear so much, rests on a false want; for if the creature deserts us, we can at least love the Creator. He has treasures to bestow upon us. But the stomach!—nothing can be compared to its sufferings; for, after all, it is the life! Pons regretted certain custards, veritable poems! certain white sauces, masterpieces! certain truffled chickens, loves! and above all, those famous carp from the Rhine, which can only be found in Paris,

and with what condiments! On certain days he would cry out, "Oh, Sophia!" in thinking of the cook of Comte Popinot. The passer-by overhearing this sigh, would have thought that the good man was thinking of a mistress, but it was an affair of something much more rare, of a fat carp! accompanied by a sauce, clear in the dish, thick on the tongue, a sauce worthy of the *Prix Montyon!* The very remembrance of these dinners, eaten thus, made considerably thinner this chief of orchestra, attacked by a gastric nostalgia.

At the beginning of the fourth month, toward the end of January, 1845, the young flute-player—who was named Wilhelm, like almost all Germans, and Schwab, to distinguish him from all the Wilhelms—which did not, however, distinguish him from all the other Schwabs—thought necessary to enlighten Schmucke on the condition of the leader of the orchestra, with which the whole theatre was concerned. It was the day of a first representation, and there were some instruments for the old German master to play.

"The good old man is going down hill, there is something in his bellows which sounds wrong. His eye is sad, the movement of his arm is growing weaker," said Wilhelm Schwab, pointing to Pons, who was mounting his pulpit with a funereal air.

"It is like dat always at seexty years," answered Schmucke.

Schmucke, like that mother in the *Chronicles of the Canongate,* who, to keep her son with her

twenty-four hours longer, caused him to be shot, was capable of sacrificing Pons for the pleasure of dining with him every day.

"Everybody at the theatre is worrying about him, and, as Mademoiselle Héloïse Brisetout, our *première danseuse,* says, 'he scarcely makes any noise in blowing his nose.'"

The old musician seemed to be sounding the horn, usually, when he blew his nose, so much did that long and hollow organ resound in his handkerchief. This uproar had been the cause of one of the most frequent complaints of the president's wife to her cousin Pons.

"I would gif a great teal to amuse heem," said Schmucke. "He is getting melengolly."

"Yes, indeed," said Wilhelm Schwab. "M. Pons seems to me such a superior being to us poor devils that I would not dare to invite him to my wedding. I am going to be married—"

"How?" demanded Schmucke.

"Oh! honestly," answered Wilhelm, who found in the queer question of Schmucke a jest of which that perfect Christian was quite incapable.

"Come, gentlemen, take your places," said Pons, looking around at his little army in the orchestra, as he heard the director's bell. They played the overture of La Fiancée du Diable, a fairy piece which ran through two hundred representations. After the first act, Wilhelm and Schmucke were left alone in the deserted orchestra. The atmosphere of the theatre was at about thirty-two degrees Réaumur.

"Dell me, den, your story," said Schmucke to Wilhelm.

"There, don't you see in the proscenium box, that young man?—do you recognize him?"

"Nod ad all."

"Ah! that's because he has yellow gloves, and because he shines with all the glory of wealth; but he is my friend, Fritz Brunner, of Frankfort-on-the-Main."

"He dat uset to come and sit in the orguesdra besite you?"

"The very same. It is hard to believe in such a metamorphosis as that, is it not?"

The hero of this promised tale was one of those Germans whose faces contain at the same time the sombre mockery of the Mephistopheles of Goethe, and the good-natured cheerfulness of the novels of August Lafontaine, of peaceful memory; cunning and simplicity, the hard eagerness of the shop and the deliberate, indolent indifference of a member of the Jockey Club; above all, that disgust which put the pistol into the hand of Werther, who was much more weary of the German princes than he was of Charlotte. It was truly a typical German face; much of the Jew and much simplicity, stupidity and courage, a knowledge which produces ennui, an experience which the slightest childishness might render useless; the abuse of beer and tobacco; but to heighten the effect of all these antitheses, a diabolical sparkle shone in the handsome, tired blue eyes. Dressed with all the elegance of a banker, Fritz

Brunner offered to the gaze of the audience a bald head, in the coloring of Titian, on each side of which curled a few locks of bright blond hair, which debauchery and want had spared him, that he might have cause to pay a hair-dresser in the days of his financial restoration. His face, formerly fresh and handsome, like that of the Jesus Christ of the painters, had acquired certain sharp tones, which the red moustache and the tawny beard rendered almost sinister. The pure blue of his eyes had become cloudy in his struggles with mortification. Finally, the thousand prostitutions of Paris had blurred the eyelids and the contour of the eyes, in which formerly a mother might have seen with delight a divine reflection of her own. This premature philosopher, this youthful old man, was the product of a step-mother.

Here begins a singular history of a prodigal son of Frankfort-on-the-Main, the most extraordinary and bizarre affair that ever happened in that sage, though central, city.

M. Gédéon Brunner, the father of this Fritz, one of the celebrated inn-keepers of Frankfort-on-the-Main, who practiced, in collusion with the bankers, the depravities, authorized by law, upon the pockets of the tourists,—an honest Calvinist, moreover,—had espoused a converted Jewess, to whose dot he owed the foundation of his fortune. This Jewess died, leaving a son Fritz, then twelve years of age, to the guardianship of his father and under the supervision of a maternal uncle, a furrier at Leipsic, the head

of the house of Virlaz & Co. Brunner, the father, was obliged by this uncle, who was not altogether as soft as his furs, to place the fortune of young Fritz in a great many *marcs banco* in the banking house of Al-Sartchild, and not to touch it. In revenge for this Israelitish exaction, the père Brunner married again, alleging the impossibility of keeping his immense inn without the eye and the arm of a wife. He married the daughter of another innkeeper in whom he saw a pearl; but he had had no experience of what an only daughter, indulged by father and mother, could be. The second Madame Brunner was a specimen of what the young German women may be when they are spiteful and frivolous. She wasted his fortune, and avenged the first Madame Brunner by making her husband the most unhappy man in his own house in the whole territory of the free city of Frankfort-on-the-Main, where they say the millionaires are now going to procure a municipal law to compel wives to cherish their husbands exclusively. This German dame loved all the different vinegars which the Germans call indiscriminately Rhine wine; she loved the *articles-Paris;* she loved to ride horse-back; she loved dress; in fact the only costly thing that she did not love, was woman. She took an aversion to the little Fritz, and would have driven him crazy if that youthful product of Calvinism and of the Mosaic dispensation had not had Frankfort for his cradle and the house of Virlaz at Leipsic for his guardian; but his uncle Virlaz, wrapped up in his furs, watched over only

the *marcs banco*, and left the infant a prey to his step-mother.

This hyena of a woman was all the more furious against this cherub, son of the beautiful Madame Brunner, because in spite of efforts worthy of a locomotive, she could not have any children herself. Prompted by a diabolical idea, this evil-minded German woman launched the young Fritz, at the age of twenty-one years, into anti-Germanic dissipations. She entertained the hope that English horses, the vinegar of the Rhine, and the Marguerites of Goethe would devour the child of the Jewess and his fortune; for Uncle Virlaz had left a fine inheritance to his little Fritz when the latter attained his majority. But, although the gaming tables of the watering-places and his wine-drinking friends, among whom was Wilhelm Schwab, disposed of the capital of Virlaz, the prodigal son himself was kept alive in order to serve, according to the will of God, as a warning to the youngsters of the city of Frankfort-on-the-Main, where all the parents held him up as a scare-crow to keep their own sons well conducted and submissive behind their own iron counters well lined with silver marks. Instead of dying in the flower of his age, Fritz Brunner had the pleasure of burying his step-mother in one of those charming cemeteries in which the Germans, under pretence of honoring their dead, deliver themselves up to their frantic passion for horticulture. The second Madame Brunner died, then, before the authors of her being, the old Brunner was quits for the money which she had

extracted from his coffers and for his sufferings, so that this inn-keeper, of a Herculean constitution, beheld himself, at the age of sixty-seven, diminished and shrunken as though he had partaken of the famous poison of the Borgias. Not to inherit the fortune of his wife after having supported her for ten years, made of this inn-keeper another ruin of Heidelberg, repaired constantly by the *Rechnungen*, "bills," of the travelers, just as that of Heidelberg is constantly repaired, in order to retain the enthusiasm of tourists who crowd to see this beautiful ruin so wonderfully preserved. All Frankfort talked about Brunner as if he were a bankrupt; they pointed at him with their fingers, and said:

"Just see to what condition we may be brought by a bad wife whose property we cannot inherit, and by a son brought up like a Frenchman."

In Italy and in Germany, the French are the cause of every misfortune, the target for all bullets; "but the God pursuing his career—" for the rest see the ode of Lefranc de Pompignan.

The wrath of the proprietor of the Grand Hotel de Hollande did not tumble exclusively upon the travelers whose bills (*rechnungen*) felt the weight of his anger. When his son was totally ruined, Gédéon, regarding him as the indirect cause of all his misfortunes, refused him bread and water, salt, fire, lodgment, and a pipe!—which in a German inn-keeping parent is the last degree of paternal malediction. The authorities of the place, not taking into account the original wrong-doing of the father, and seeing

in him only one of the most unfortunate men in Frankfort-on-the-Main, came to his aid; they expelled Fritz from the territory of their free city, making German war upon him. Justice is neither more humane nor more intelligent at Frankfort than elsewhere, albeit that city is the seat of the German Diet. It is but seldom that a magistrate reascends the stream of crimes and misfortunes to ascertain who holds the urn from which escapes the first thread of water. If Brunner forgot his son, the friends of the son imitated the father.

Ah! if this history could have been played before the footlights for this audience, in the midst of whom journalists, lions, and some Parisiennes were inquiring from whence came the profoundly tragic face of this German, suddenly risen to the surface of the gay world of Paris, on the occasion of a first representation, alone, in a proscenium box, it would have been a much finer spectacle than the fairy play of La Fiancée du Diable, though that were the two hundred thousandth representation of the sublime parable played in Mesopotamia, three thousand years before Christ.

*

Fritz traveled on foot to Strasbourg, and there he met with something which the prodigal son of the Bible did not find in the country of Holy Writ. Herein is revealed the superiority of Alsace, where beat so many generous hearts that are born to demonstrate to Germans the beauty of a combination of French wit and German solidity. Wilhelm, who had lately come into the inheritance of his father and his mother, was possessed of one hundred thousand francs. He opened his arms to Fritz, he opened his heart, he opened his house, he opened his purse. To describe the moment when Fritz, dusty, unhappy, and quasi-leprous, encountered on the other bank of the Rhine, a real piece of twenty francs in the hand of a veritable friend,—that would be to launch into an ode; a Pindar alone could pour it forth in Greek to humanity, to revive expiring friendship. Put the names of Fritz and Wilhelm with those of Damon and Pythias, of Castor and Pollux, of Orestes and Pylades, of Dubreuil and Pmejah, of Schmucke and Pons, and with all the fancy names which we give to the two friends of Monomotapa,—for Lafontaine, man of genius that he was, has made semblances of them, without body, without reality,—add these two new names to these illustrations, with all the more reason that Wilhelm ate up his patrimony in company with Fritz, just as

Fritz had formerly drunk up his with Wilhelm; and smoking at the same time, be it well understood, every known species of tobacco.

The two friends, strange to say, swallowed this inheritance in the beer-shops of Strasbourg, in a manner the most stupid and the most vulgar, with the ballet girls of the Strasbourg theatre, and with Alsatians, who "of their little brooms had nothing left but the handles." Every morning they said to each other:

"We must really pull up and take a stand, and do something with the little that remains to us!"

"Bah! one day more," Fritz would exclaim; but to-morrow—oh! to-morrow!

In the life of the spendthrift, *To-day* is a great big coxcomb, but *To-morrow* is a great coward, who takes fright at the courage of his predecessor; To-day is the Captain of the ancient comedy, and To-morrow is the Pierrot of our pantomimes. When they came to their last thousand-franc note, the two friends took their places in that traveling conveyance, the Messageries, called royal, which conducted them to Paris, where they lodged under the roof of the Hotel du Rhin, Rue de Mail, kept by one Graff, formerly headwaiter with Gédéon Brunner. Fritz secured a situation as clerk, at a salary of six hundred francs, with the Keller Brothers, bankers, to whom Graff recommended him. Graff, the proprietor of the Hotel du Rhin, is the brother of the famous tailor Graff. The tailor took Wilhelm as book-keeper. Graff found these two places for the two prodigal sons in remembrance of his

apprenticeship at the Hotel de Hollande. These two facts—a friend ruined, recognized by a rich friend, and a German inn-keeper interesting himself for two penniless compatriots—might lead some people to believe that the present history is a novel, but truth so much resembles fiction, that the fable takes in our day unheard-of pains to resemble truth.

Fritz, a clerk at six hundred francs, and Wilhelm, a book-keeper at the same salary, very soon perceived the difficulty of living in a city so enticing as Paris. Therefore, during the second year of their sojourn, in 1837, Wilhelm, who possessed a rare talent for the flute, secured a place in the orchestra led by Pons, to be able to earn occasional butter for his bread. As to Fritz, he could find no other supplement to his salary than by displaying the financial capacity of a descendant of the Virlaz. In spite of his assiduity, perhaps because of his very talents, the Frankforter had only reached two thousand francs in 1843. Poverty, that divine stepmother, did for these two young men that which their own mothers had never been able to accomplish: she taught them economy, the world, and life; she gave them that great, that stern education which she dispenses with drubbings to all great men —all of them unhappy in their youth. Fritz and Wilhelm, being only sufficiently-ordinary mortals, did not give ear to all the lessons of poverty; they struggled against her coercions, they found her bosom hard, her arms fleshless, and they were quite unable to recognize in her that good fairy Urgela,

who yields to the caresses of men of genius. Nevertheless, they learned the full value of money, and they promised themselves to clip its wings if ever it again crossed their threshold.

"Well, Papa Schmucke, I will explain it to you in a word," replied Wilhelm, who recounted at full length this history, in German, to the pianist. "The père Brunner is dead. He was, unknown to his son or to M. Graff, with whom we lodged, one of the first promoters of the Baden railroads, from which he realized immense profits, and he has left four millions! I am playing the flute this evening for the last time. If this were not a first representation, I should have left the theatre several days ago, but I did not wish to fail in my obligations."

"Dat ees right, yung man," said Schmucke. "Bud whom aire you going to marry?"

"The daughter of M. Graff, our host, the proprietor of the Hotel du Rhin. I have loved Mademoiselle Émilie for seven years. She has read so many immoral romances that she has refused all offers for my sake, without any idea of what might come of it. This young lady will be very rich; she is the only heiress of the Graffs, the tailors of the Rue de Richelieu. Fritz gives me five times the sum that we squandered together at Strasbourg—five hundred thousand francs! He puts one million of francs into a banking-house, where M. Graff, the tailor, will place five hundred thousand francs, also; the father of my bride will allow me to invest the dot, which is two hundred and fifty thousand francs, and he

himself comes in as a sleeping partner with as much more. The house of Brunner, Schwab & Co. will have, then, two million five hundred thousand francs of capital. Fritz has just bought shares to the amount of fifteen hundred thousand francs in the Bank of France, to guarantee our account. This is not all of Fritz's fortune, for he still has his father's houses in Frankfort, which are rated at a million, and he has already leased the Grand Hotel de Hollande to a cousin of the Graffs."

"You were lookink zorrowfully at your frient," remarked Schmucke, who had been listening to Wilhelm with attention. "Ees it dat you aire uneesy about heem?"

"I am uneasy, but it is about the happiness of Fritz," said Wilhelm. "Look at him. Is that the face of a contented man? I am afraid of Paris for him; I would like to see him do as I am doing. The ancient demon may reawaken in him. Of our two heads, it was never his that was the better weighted. That evening dress, that opera glass, is what worries me. He has only looked at the Lorettes in the audience. Ah! if you only knew how difficult it is to persuade Fritz to marry! he has a horror of what they call in France 'paying court;' and he will have to be launched into family life suddenly, just as in England they launch a man into eternity."

During the tumult which breaks forth at the conclusion of every first representation, the first flute gave his invitation to his orchestra leader. Pons accepted joyfully. Schmucke perceived, for the

first time in three months, a smile on the face of his friend; he brought him home to the Rue de Normandie in profound silence, for he recognized in that gleam of joy the profundity of the trouble that was devouring Pons. That a man so truly noble, so disinterested, so grand in feeling, should have such weaknesses!—this was what stupefied the stoic Schmucke, who had become horribly saddened, for he felt the necessity of renouncing the sight of his "goot Bons" sitting opposite him at table every day, for Pons' own sake; and he doubted if the sacrifice were possible; the thought drove him crazy.

The proud silence maintained by Pons in his refuge on the Mount Aventine of the Rue de Normandie, had necessarily been noticed by the president's wife, who, delivered from her parasite, concerned herself but little about him; she thought, as did her charming daughter, that the old man had discovered the trick played by her little Lili; but not so, however, the president. The president, Camusot de Marville, a fat little man grown pompous since his advancement at court, admired Cicero, preferred the Opéra-Comique to the Italiens, compared one actor with another, followed the crowd in all things, step by step; he repeated as his own, all the opinions of the ministerial journals, and in rendering judgment paraphrased the ideas of the councilor who had spoken before him. This magistrate, the principal traits of whose character were well known, obliged by his position to take serious views in life, was especially tenacious of family ties. Like most

husbands who are naturally ruled by their wives, the president asserted in little things an independence which was respected by his wife. If, for a whole month, he had accepted the empty reasons given him by his wife for the disappearance of Pons, he ended by thinking it very singular that the old musician and friend of forty years standing, came no longer to his house, especially after having made so important a gift as the fan of Madame de Pompadour. This fan, recognized by Comte Popinot as a chef-d'œuvre, won for Madame de Marville at the Tuileries, where the treasure was passed from hand to hand, compliments which flattered her vanity excessively; she had pointed out to her the beauties of the ten ivory sticks, each of which showed carvings of unheard-of delicacy. A Russian lady—the Russians always think they are in Russia—offered in the salon of the Comte Popinot, six thousand francs to the president's wife for this extraordinary fan, smiling to see it in such hands, for, it must be admitted, it was the fan of a duchess.

"It cannot be denied that our poor cousin understands these foolish trifles," said Cécile to her father, the day after this offer was made.

"Foolish trifles!" exclaimed the president. "Why, the Government is about to pay three hundred thousand francs for the collection of the late Monsieur the Councilor Dusommerard, and to spend, in conjunction with the city of Paris, nearly one million, in buying and repairing the Hôtel Cluny, to hold these 'foolish treasures.'—These 'foolish treasures,' my

dear child, are frequently the only evidences left us of departed civilizations. An Etruscan pot, a necklace, which are worth sometimes, the one forty, and the other fifty, thousand francs, are the 'foolish trifles' which reveal to us the perfection of the arts at the time of the siege of Troy, in demonstrating that the Etruscans were Trojans who had taken refuge in Italy!"

Such was the style of the pleasantry of the fat little president; he usually took a tone of ponderous irony with his wife and daughter.

"The combination of all the varieties of knowledge which these 'foolish trifles' require, Cécile," he resumed, "is a science that is called archæology. Archæology comprises architecture, sculpture, painting, goldsmiths' work, keramics, cabinet and ebony work, which is a wholly-modern art, laces, tapestries—in short, all the creations of human labor."

"Cousin Pons is, then, quite a learned man," said Cécile.

"Ah, now, why does he not come here any more?" demanded the president, with the air of a man who is conscious of a commotion produced by a thousand forgotten observations, the sudden reunion of which "packs" things, to borrow a sportsman's expression.

"He has probably taken offense at some trifle," replied his wife. "I was not perhaps quite as grateful as I should have been for the gift of this fan. I am, as you know, sufficiently ignorant—"

"You! one of Servin's best pupils!" cried the president. "You do not know Watteau?"

"I know David, Gérard, Gros, and Girodet, and Guérin, and M. de Forbin, and M. Turpin de Crissé—"

"You ought to have—"

"What ought I to have, monsieur?" demanded the president's wife, looking at her husband with the air of the Queen of Sheba.

"Known who Watteau is, my dear; he is very much the fashion," replied the president, with a humility which denoted his many obligations to his wife

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This conversation took place a few days before the first representation of *La Fiancée du Diable*, at which the whole orchestra was struck by the feeble health of Pons. Before long, all the families accustomed to see Pons at their dinner tables and to send him on their errands, made inquiry about him among themselves, and there diffused itself in the circle in which the good soul usually moved, an uneasiness which was all the greater since several persons saw him at his post in the theatre. Notwithstanding the care with which Pons avoided, in his promenades, his former acquaintances when he met them, he at last came face to face with the former minister, Comte Popinot, in the establishment of Monistrol, one of those illustrious and audacious merchants of the new Boulevard Beaumarchais, formerly mentioned by Pons to Madame de Marville, and through whose crafty enthusiasm is increased from day to day the prices of curiosities which, as they say, are becoming so rare that there will soon be no more of them to be had.

"My dear Pons, why do we no longer see you?" said Comte Popinot. "We miss you very much, and Madame Popinot does not know what to make of this desertion."

"Monsieur le Comte," replied the old man, "I was given to understand in a house, that of a relation,

that at my age, people are *de trop* in society. I have never been received with much courtesy, but at least I was never insulted. I have never asked anything of anyone," he said, with the pride of the artist. "In return for certain civilities, I have often made myself useful to those who welcomed me; but it appears that I have made a mistake. I am expected to fetch and carry at every one's beck and call, for the honor I receive in dining among my friends, my relations. Well, I have resigned my office of 'poor relation.' At home I find every day that which no table has offered me elsewhere, a true friend."

These words, full of a bitterness which the old artist still had the faculty to further enforce by gesture and accent, so impressed the peer of France that he took the worthy musician aside.

"My old friend, tell me what has happened. Can you not confide to me who it is that has wounded you? You will allow me, I am sure, to point out to you that in my house no one has failed in paying you proper respect."

"You are the only exception that I make," said the poor man. "Besides, were it otherwise, you are a great lord, a statesman, and your occupations would excuse everything if need were."

Pons, subjected to the diplomatic tact which Popinot had acquired in the manipulation of public affairs, ended by relating his ill-usage in the house of President de Marville. Popinot took up the victim's wrongs so warmly that he went home and

told the whole story to Madame Popinot, an excellent and worthy woman, who made certain representations to the president's wife the first time they met each other. The former minister having, on his side, said a few words on the subject to the president, there was a family explanation in the Camusot de Marville household. Though Camusot was not altogether master in his own house, his remonstrances in this case were too well founded on facts and on justice for his wife and his daughter not to recognize their force; both of them admitted the wrong in throwing the blame upon the servants. These latter, called up and reprimanded, obtained their pardon only by full confession, which proved to the president what good reasons Pons had for remaining at home. Like the masters of all households ruled by the wives, the president displayed all his majesty, marital and judicial, in declaring to his domestics that they should all be sent away and lose all the advantages acquired by their long service in his house, if in future his cousin Pons and all those who did him the honor to come to his house, were not treated as well as he himself was. This last remark made Madeleine smile.

"You have but one chance for forgiveness," said the president, "and that is to make your excuses to my cousin, and ask his pardon. Go, and tell him that your situation in my house depends entirely upon him, for I shall send you all away if he does not forgive you."

The next day, the president went off at an early

hour to pay a visit to his cousin before the opening of the court. The appearance of M. le Président de Marville, announced by Madame Cibot, was an event. Pons, who received this honor for the first time in his life, foresaw a reparation.

"My dear cousin," said the president, after the usual compliments, "I have at last learned the cause of your absence. Your conduct increases, if that were possible, the esteem I feel for you. I shall say but one word to you on this subject. My servants are all dismissed. My wife and daughter are in distress; they wish to see you and to make an explanation. In all this, my dear cousin, there is only one innocent person—and that is an old judge; do not punish me, then, for the thoughtlessness of a giddy young girl whose heart was set on dining with the Popinots; above all, when I come to you to make peace, in admitting that all the fault is on our side.—A friendship of thirty-six years, even supposing it changed, has still some rights. Come, sign a peace by dining with us to-night."

Pons involved himself in a diffuse reply, and finally contrived to explain to his cousin that he was to be present that evening at the marriage of a musician of his orchestra who was about to throw away his flute and become a banker.

"Very well, then, to-morrow."

"My cousin, Madame le Comtesse Popinot, has done me the honor to invite me by a letter of such cordial kindness—"

"The day after to-morrow, then," resumed the president.

"The day after to-morrow, the partner of my first flute, a German, Monsieur Brunner, gives a return party to the bride and bridegroom—"

"You are well worthy of such contention for the pleasure of receiving you," said the president. "Very well, Sunday next. A week's notice—as they say at the Palais."

"But that day we dine with M. Graff, the father-in-law of the flute—"

"Well then, Saturday! Between now and then you will have time to comfort a little girl who has already shed many tears for her fault. God asked nothing but repentance. Will you, then, be more exacting than the Eternal Father, with this poor little Cécile?"

Pons, taken on his weak side, fell back upon formulas that were more than polite, and accompanied the president to the landing of the staircase. An hour later all the servants of the president arrived at the house of the good man Pons. They behaved after the manner of servants, cringing and wheedling; they even wept! Madeleine took M. Pons apart and threw herself resolutely at his feet.

"It was I, monsieur, who did it all, and monsieur knows well that I love him," she said, bursting into tears. "It was to the revenge which made my blood boil, that monsieur must lay all the blame for this miserable business. We shall lose all of our annuities!—Monsieur, I was beside myself, and I do not

want my fellow-servants to suffer for my folly. I see now that fate has not destined me for monsieur. I have grown reasonable. I had too much ambition, but I love you always, monsieur. During ten years I have thought of no other happiness than that of making yours and of taking care of you here. What a beautiful fate !—Oh, if monsieur only knew how I love him ! But monsieur must have seen it in all my wickednesses. If I should die to-morrow, what would they find?—My will drawn up in your favor—Yes, monsieur, in my trunk, under my jewels!"

By sounding this chord, Madeleine delivered the old bachelor to those enjoyments of vanity which always come from the knowledge that we have inspired a passion, even when the passion itself is displeasing. After having nobly forgiven Madeleine, he took the whole household back into favor, promising that he would speak to his cousin, the president's wife, asking her to keep all of them still in her household. Pons saw himself, with an ineffable delight, re-established in all his habitual enjoyments, without having committed any unworthy action. People had come to him, the dignity of his character would be enhanced ; but in explaining his triumph to his friend Schmucke, he had the pain of observing the latter become sad and full of unexpressed doubts. Nevertheless, at the sight of the sudden change which took place in Pons's countenance, the good German ended by rejoicing in the sacrifice of the happiness which he had tasted, of

having his friend all to himself for nearly four months. The moral maladies have one great advantage over the physical ones, they can be cured instantaneously by the fulfillment of the desire which causes them, as they owe their origin to privation. Pons this morning was no longer the same man. The sad, and apparently dying, old man gave place to the satisfied Pons, who had lately carried to the president's wife the fan of the Marquise de Pompadour. But Schmucke fell into profound reveries over this phenomenon which he could not comprehend; for genuine stoicism can never explain to itself French social subserviency. Pons was a true Frenchman of the Empire, in whom the gallantry of the last century was united to the devotion to women, so well celebrated in the song "Partant pour la Syrie," and others. Schmucke buried his chagrin in his heart, under the flowers of his German philosophy; but at the end of a week he had grown quite yellow, and Madame Cibot employed much artifice to get him to see the "doctor of the quarter." This physician feared an *icterus*, and he left Madame Cibot overwhelmed by his learned word, the explanation of which is "jaundice."

For the first time, perhaps, the two friends dined out together that evening; but for Schmucke it was like making a trip into Germany. In fact, Johann Graff, the master of the Hotel du Rhin, and his daughter Émilie; Wolfgang Graff, the tailor, and his wife; Fritz Brunner and Wilhelm Schwab, were all Germans. Pons and the notary found themselves

the only Frenchmen admitted to the banquet. The tailors, who possessed a magnificent house in the Rue de Richelieu, between the Rue Neuve-des-Petits-Champs and the Rue Villedo, had educated their niece, whose father feared, not without reason, to let her come in contact with the people of all kinds who frequented his hotel. These worthy tailors, who loved this child as if she were their own daughter, gave up the ground floor to the young couple. There, too, was to be established the banking house of Brunner, Schwab & Co. As all these arrangements had been made a month before, in order to give time to come into the possession of the inheritance which had fallen to Brunner, the author of all this felicity, the apartment of the future wedded pair had been richly renovated and furnished by the famous tailor. The counting-rooms of the bank were placed in a wing which connected a magnificent warehouse with the old mansion standing between the court and the garden.

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As they walked from the Rue de Normandie to the Rue de Richelieu, Pons abstracted from the absent-minded Schmucke the details of this new story of the prodigal son, for whom death had killed the fatted inn-keeper. Pons, just reconciled with his nearest relations, was immediately seized with the desire to marry Fritz Brunner to Cécile de Marville. It so chanced that the notary of the brothers Graff was actually the son-in-law and the successor to Cardot, formerly assistant head-clerk in his office, and with whom Pons had frequently dined.

"Ah! is that you, M. Berthier?" said the old musician, extending his hand to his ex-amphitryon.

"And why do you no longer give us the pleasure of coming to dine with us?" asked the notary. "My wife was uneasy about you. We saw you at the first representation of *La Fiancée du Diable,* and our uneasiness was turned into curiosity."

"Old men are sensitive," replied Pons, "they have the misfortune of being a century behind the times; but what can be done?—it is enough to represent one, they can never belong to that in which they die."

"Ah!" said the notary, with a knowing air, "we cannot keep pace with two centuries at once."

"Look here!" said the good old man, drawing the young notary into a corner, "why could you not marry my cousin, Cécile de Marville?—"

"Ah! why?" replied the notary. "In this century, when luxury has got down to the lodge of the concierges, the young men hesitate to couple their fate with that of the daughter of the president of the Cour Royale of Paris, when he will only give her a dot of one hundred thousand francs. There is no such thing now-a-days as a wife who costs her husband only three thousand francs a year, in the class to which the husband of Mademoiselle de Marville must belong. The income from such a dot would not pay the expenses of the toilet of such a wife. A bachelor with fifteen to twenty thousand francs of income lives in a pretty *entre-sol*, the world doesn't require of him any display, he can have only one servant, he puts all his income into his pleasures, he has no other proprieties to consider than those of which his tailor takes charge. Courted by all the designing mothers, he is one of the kings of Parisian fashion. On the contrary, a wife must have an establishment; she wants a carriage of her own; if she goes to the theatre she must have a box, whereas a bachelor can take a stall; in short, she requires for herself all of that fortune which the unmarried man formerly spent on himself. Suppose a couple with thirty thousand francs of income: as the world now is, the rich bachelor becomes a poor devil who has to consider whether he can afford the price of a ticket to Chantilly. Then come the children,—and poverty is felt at once. As M. and Madame de Marville are barely fifty, the *expectations* have fifteen or twenty years to run; no bachelor cares to carry them

in his portfolio for that length of time, and the gangrene of this calculation is so deep in the heart of all the young rattlepates who dance the polka with the Lorettes at Mabille, that all the marriageable young men study both phases of this problem without needing us notaries to explain it to them. Between ourselves, Mademoiselle de Marville leaves to her *pretenders* a heart sufficiently calm not to disturb the head, and they all of them have made these anti-matrimonial reflections. If some young man in the enjoyment of his reason and of twenty thousand francs of income draws up for himself *in petto* a programme of an alliance that shall satisfy his ambition, Mademoiselle de Marville is so far from filling the bill—"

"And why?" asked the astonished musician.

"Ah!" replied the notary, "to-day almost all these bachelors, even if they are as ill-favored as you and I, my dear Pons, have the impertinence to wish a dot of six hundred thousand francs, a young woman of good family, very handsome, very spirituelle, very well educated, without defects, perfect."

"My cousin will then find it difficult to get married?"

"She will remain unmarried just so long as her father and her mother cannot decide to give her Marville for her portion; if they had chosen to do this she would have been Vicomtesse Popinot already. But here is M. Brunner; we are going to read the deed of association for the house of Brunner & Co., and the marriage contract."

As soon as the introduction and the compliments were over, Pons, invited by the parents to sign the contract, listened to the reading of the deeds, and then about half-past five o'clock the company proceeded to the dining-room. The dinner was one of those sumptuous repasts which the merchants give when they lay aside all thoughts of business; this repast, moreover, testified to the relations which Graff, the master of the Hotel du Rhin, had with the chief caterers of Paris. Never had Pons nor Schmucke known such fare. There were dishes *à ravir la pensée*—pastry of unspeakable delicacy, smelts, incomparably fried, a *ferra* from Geneva with the true Genevese sauce, and a cream for the plum-pudding which would have astonished the famous doctor who, they say, invented it in London. The company rose from the table at ten o'clock in the evening. The amount of Rhine wine and French wine that was consumed would have astonished dandies, for no one knows the quantity of liquid that a German can absorb while sitting calm and tranquil. You have to dine in Germany and see the bottles succeed one another, as wave succeeds wave on the lovely shore of the Mediterranean, and disappear, as if the Germans had the absorbing powers of a sponge or sand; but harmoniously, without the French uproar; the discussion remains as sober as the impromptu of a usurer, the faces flush like those of the fiancées painted in the frescoes of Cornelius or of Schnorr, that is to say, imperceptibly, and the souvenirs rise and spread

like the smoke of the pipes—slowly and deliberately.

Towards half-past ten, Pons and Schmucke found themselves sitting on a bench in the garden, on either side of their former flute, without knowing in the least how they had got there, or what had led them to explain all the particulars of their characters, their opinions and their misfortunes. In the middle of this *pot-pourri* of confidences, Wilhelm spoke of his desire to marry off Fritz, with a forcefulness and eloquence quite vinous.

"What should you say to this programme for your friend Brunner?" cried Pons in Wilhelm's ear. "A charming young girl, sensible, twenty-four years of age, belonging to a family of the highest distinction, the father occupying one of the most elevated positions, as magistrate, one hundred thousand francs for a dot, and expectations of a million?"

"Wait," replied Schwab, "I will go and speak to Fritz about it at once."

And the two musicians saw Brunner and his friend promenading up and down in the garden, passing and repassing before their eyes, listening alternately to each other. Pons, whose head felt rather heavy, and who, without being absolutely drunk, had as much lightness in his ideas as he had weight in the organ that contained them, looked at Fritz Brunner through the diaphanous cloud exhaled by wine, and chose to see on his countenance aspirations for family happiness. Schwab shortly presented to M. Pons his friend and associate, who thanked the old

gentleman cordially for the interest he deigned to take in him. A conversation ensued in which Schmucke and Pons, the two celibates, exalted marriage and allowed themselves, without any malicious meaning, to make the punning statement that "it was the end of man." When the ices, the tea, the punch, and the cakes were served in the new apartment of the bride and groom, the hilarity rose to its highest pitch among these estimable merchants, nearly all of them drunken, at learning that the silent partner of the new banking-house was about to follow the example of his associate.

Schmucke and Pons, at two o'clock in the morning, returned home along the boulevards, philosophizing to the limits of reason, on the harmony of all things here below.

On the morrow Pons went to visit his cousin, the president's wife, full of the profound joy of rendering good for evil. Poor, dear, noble soul!—Certainly he did indeed attain to the sublime, as every one will agree, for we are now in an age when they give the Montyon prize to those who do their duty and follow the precepts of the Gospel.

"Ah! they will feel under immense obligations to their poor relation," said he to himself, as he turned the corner of the Rue de Choiseul.

A man less absorbed in his own contentment than Pons, a man of the world, a suspicious man, in re-entering this house, would have observed more closely the president's wife and her daughter; but this poor musician was a child, an artist full of simple naïveté,

believing only in moral excellences as he believed in the beautiful in the arts; he was delighted with the caresses which Madame de Marville and her daughter bestowed upon him. This worthy soul, who had seen vaudeville, drama and comedy, played for a dozen years before his eyes, was quite unable to perceive the grimaces of the social comedy, to which without doubt he had become dulled. Those who frequent the Parisian world and who can comprehend the dryness of body and soul of the president's wife, eager only for honors and enraged at her own virtue, her hypocritical piety, and the haughtiness of character of a woman accustomed to rule in her own household, may well imagine the hidden hatred she bore for her husband's cousin ever since the day when she had put herself in the wrong. All her demonstrations of friendship and those of her daughter were, then, doubled by a formidable desire for revenge, evidently set aside for the time being. For the first time in her life, Amélie had been openly to blame in the eyes of her husband, over whom she ruled; and now she was obliged to show herself affectionate to the author of her defeat!—No analogy to this situation can be found, except perhaps in those hypocrisies which endure for years in the secret college of cardinals, or in the chapters of the chiefs of religious orders. At three o'clock, at the hour when the president returned from the Palais, Pons had scarcely finished recounting the marvelous incidents of his acquaintance with M. Frédéric Brunner, and of the wedding feast of

the night before, which had not finished till the morning, and of all that concerned the aforesaid Frédéric Brunner. Cécile had gone straight to the point by inquiring in what manner he dressed—this Frédéric Brunner, of his figure, of his style, of the color of his hair and his eyes, and when she had conjectured that his appearance was distinguished, she admired the generosity of his character.

"To give five hundred thousand francs to his companion in misfortune! Oh, mamma, I shall have a carriage and a box at the Italiens!"

And Cécile became almost pretty in thinking of the realization of all the pretensions of her mother for her, and of the accomplishment of those hopes of which she had long despaired.

As for the president's wife, she only uttered this one word: "My dear little girl, you may be married in a fortnight."

All mothers call their daughters, when they are twenty-three years of age, "little girls!"

"Nevertheless," said the president, "we must have time to make inquiries; never will I give my daughter to the first comer—"

"As for inquiries, it was Berthier who drew up the deeds," replied the old artist. "As to the young man, my dear cousin," he added, turning to Madame de Marville, "you know what you have said to me! Very well. He is over forty years of age and half his head is bald. He wishes to find in a family a haven from the storms of life, and I have not dissuaded him; all tastes are found in human nature."

"All the more reason to see M. Frédéric Brunner," replied the president. "I do not wish to give my daughter to a valetudinarian."

"Very well, my dear cousin," said Pons, still addressing Madame de Marville, "you can judge of my aspirant in five days, if you like; for with your ideas, one interview will suffice—"

Cécile and her mother made a gesture of delight.

"Frédéric, who is quite a distinguished amateur, has begged me to let him see my little collection," continued Cousin Pons. "You have never seen my pictures and curiosities: come," said he to his two relatives; "you will be there as two ladies brought by my friend Schmucke, and you can make acquaintance with the intended, without being compromised. Frédéric may be kept in perfect ignorance as to who you are."

"Excellent!" cried the president.

The consideration now showered on the formerly disdained parasite may be imagined. The poor man was on this day indeed, the cousin of the president's wife. The happy mother, sinking her hatred under the waves of her joy, bestowed upon him looks, smiles, words, which sent the good man into an ecstacy at the thought of the good he was doing and of the future which he saw opening before him. Should he not find at the Brunners, the Schwabs, the Graffs, just such dinners as that he had eaten the night before? He saw before him a land flowing with milk and honey, and a marvelous vista of "covered dishes," gastronomic surprises, and exquisite wines.

"If our cousin Pons brings about this affair," said the president to his wife, when Pons had departed, "we ought to give him an annuity equal to his salary as leader of the orchestra."

"Certainly," said Madame de Marville.

Cécile was commissioned, in case she liked the young man, to make the old musician accept this ignoble munificence.

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The next day, the president, anxious to have authentic proofs of the fortune of M. Frédéric Brunner, went to see the notary. Berthier, notified of his coming by Madame de Marville, had sent for his new client, the banker Schwab, the ex-flute. Dazzled by such an alliance for his friend,—it is well known how much the Germans value social distinctions! In Germany a woman is Mrs. General, Mrs. Counsellor, Mrs. Advocate,—Schwab was as fluent as a collector of bric-à-brac who thinks he is about to trick a dealer.

"Above all," said the father of Cécile to Schwab, "as I will give by a deed, all my estate of Marville to my daughter, I should desire to marry her under the dotal system. M. Brunner will invest, then, a million of francs in land to increase the Marville property, and constitute it an immovable settlement which will put the future of my daughter and her children in safety from the uncertainties of a bank."

Berthier stroked his chin, reflecting, "He is doing well, M. le Président!"

Schwab, after getting the dotal system fully explained to him, answered heartily for his friend. This clause promised to accomplish the very thing that he had heard Fritz so much desire, that of securing him against the chance of ever falling back into poverty.

"There are at this moment about twelve hundred thousands francs' worth of farms and meadow-lands for sale," said the president.

"A million in shares of the Bank of France will be quite sufficient," said Schwab, "to guarantee the account of our house at the bank; Fritz does not wish to put more than two millions in business; he will do what you wish, M. le Président."

The president rendered his two women almost frantic when he related to them this news. Never had so rich a capture fallen so complaisantly into the conjugal net.

"You shall be Madame Brunner de Marville," said the father, "for I will obtain for your husband permission to join this name to his own, and later, he can get letters of naturalization. If I become peer of France he shall succeed me."

The president's wife employed five days in preparing her daughter. On the day of the interview, she dressed Cécile with her own hands, equipped her with the same care that the admiral of the blue bestows upon the equipment of the pleasure-yacht of the Queen of England when she departs for her voyage to Germany.

On their side, Pons and Schmucke cleaned and dusted the museum, the apartment, and the furniture, with the agility of sailors swabbing the deck of an admiral's flag-ship. Not a speck of dust in the wood-carvings. All the brasses shone. The glass over the pastels was cleaned till it gave to view clearly the works of Latour, of Greuze, and of

Liautard, the illustrious painter of *la Chocolatière*, the gem of this style of painting, alas! so fugitive. The inimitable enamel of the Florentine bronzes gleamed. The stained glass glowed in its splendid colors. Each treasure sparkled in its own place and uttered its own note to the soul in this concert of masterpieces arranged by these two musicians—the one as true a poet as the other.

Clever enough to avoid the difficulties of an entrance upon the assembled company, the ladies arrived first; they wished to take possession of the ground. Pons presented his friend Schmucke to his relations, in whose eyes he appeared to be an idiot. Occupied as they were with the prospect of a fiancé four times a millionaire, the two ignorant women paid sufficiently slight attention to the artistic elucidation of the worthy Pons. They regarded with an indifferent eye, enamels of Petitot, carefully displayed in three marvelous frames of red velvet. The flower-pieces of Van Huysum and David de Heim, the insects of Abraham Mignon, the Van Eycks, the Albert Dürers, the genuine Cranachs, the Giorgione, the Sébastien del Piombo, Backhuysen, Hobbema, and Géricault. All these marvels of painting did not even excite their curiosity, for they were waiting for the sun which was to light up all this richness; nevertheless they were surprised at the beauty of some Etruscan jewels and the real value of the snuff-boxes. They were enthusing, for politeness, over some Florentine bronzes which they held in their hands at the

moment Madame Cibot announced M. Brunner! They refrained from turning around, but they took advantage of a superb Venice glass framed in a huge mass of carved ebony, to examine this phœnix of matrimonial aspirants.

Frédérick, warned by Wilhelm, had brushed together in a mass the few hairs that remained to him. He wore a handsome pair of pantaloons of a soft, though dark shade, a silk waistcoat of supreme elegance and of a new cut, an openwork linen shirt of the finest linen, made by hand in Holland, and a blue cravat figured with white lines. His watch-chain came from Florent and Chanor, and so did the knob of his cane. As for his coat, Père Graff had cut it himself out of his very finest cloth. A pair of *gants de Suède* proclaimed the man who had already squandered the fortune of his mother. From the polish of his varnished boots it was easy to guess at the little coupé and the two horses of the banker standing before the door in the street below, even if the ears of the two women had not already heard the rolling of its wheels in the Rue de Normandie.

When the rake of twenty is the chrysalis of a banker, he develops at forty into so keen an observer, that Brunner had already learned of the advantage that a German can obtain by his apparent simplicity. He had assumed, for this morning, the reflective air of a man who is deciding between family life to be possibly assumed, or the dissipations of a bachelor to be continued. Such an expression in a Gallicized German seemed to Cécile

the superlative of the romantic. She saw another Werther in the descendant of the Virlaz. Where is the young girl who cannot make her own little romance out of the history of her marriage? Cécile thought herself the happiest of women when Brunner grew enthusiastic before the magnificent works of art collected during forty years of patience, and estimated them for the first time at their real value, to the huge satisfaction of Pons.

"He is a poet," said Mademoiselle de Marville to herself. "There are millions of ideas for him in these things." Now, a poet is a man who does not calculate, who leaves his wife mistress of his fortune, a man easy to lead and who occupies himself with fooleries.

Every pane in the two windows in the old room was of Swiss stained glass, the least valuable of which was worth one thousand francs, and there were sixteen of these chefs-d'œuvre, in the search of which amateurs travel far and near now-a-days. In 1815, this glass could be bought for from six to ten francs. The worth of the sixty paintings alone, contained in this rare collection, all of them pure masterpieces, never retouched, perfectly authentic, could not be ascertained except in the heat of the competition of a public sale. Enclosing each picture was a frame of an immense value showing specimens of every workmanship,—the Venetian, with its heavy ornamentation similar to that of the present English silverware; the Roman frame, so remarkable for that which artists call the *flafla;* the Spanish frame

with its bold leafage; the Flemish and German with their naïve figures; the frames of tortoise-shell inlaid with copper, with brass, with mother-of-pearl or ivory; the frame of ebony, the frame in box-wood, the frame in brass, the frames of Louis XIII., XIV., XV., and XVI.—in short, a unique collection of the finest models. Pons, more fortunate than the museums of Dresden and Vienna, possessed a frame made by the famous Brustolone, the Michael Angelo of wood-carving.

Mademoiselle de Marville very naturally asked for explanations about each new treasure. She made Brunner initiate her into the knowledge of these marvels. And she was so artless in her exclamations, she appeared so delighted to learn from Frédéric the value, the beauty of a painting, of a carving, of a bronze, that the German thawed out,—his face became really youthful. In short, on both sides, they went somewhat further than was intended at this first interview, especially as it was supposed to be accidental.

This meeting lasted three hours. Brunner offered his hand to Cécile, to assist her down the staircase. In descending the steps with judicious slowness, Cécile, still conversing on the fine arts, expressed her surprise at the enthusiasm of her admirer for the knick-knacks of her cousin Pons.

"You really think, then, that what we have just seen is worth a great deal of money?"

"Ah! mademoiselle, if monsieur your cousin would only offer to sell me his collection, I would give him

for it this very evening eight hundred thousand francs, and I should not be making a bad bargain. The sixty pictures alone would bring more at a public sale."

"I believe it, since you tell me so," she replied. "And it must be true, because it is for such things that you chiefly care."

"Oh, mademoiselle!" exclaimed Brunner, "for my sole reply to that reproach, I am going to ask of madame your mother the permission to present myself at her house in order to have the happiness of seeing you again."

"How clever she is, my little girl!" thought the president's wife, who was following at the heels of her daughter.

"With the greatest pleasure, monsieur," she said aloud. "I hope that you will come with our cousin Pons at the dinner hour. My husband, the president, will be delighted to make your acquaintance.—Thank you, cousin."

She pressed the arm of Pons so significantly that the sacramental phrase, "We are one for life and death!" would scarcely have seemed more binding. She actually embraced Pons with the glance that accompanied this "thank you, cousin."

After putting the young lady into the coach, and when it had disappeared around the corner of the Rue Charlot, Brunner talked bric-à-brac to Pons, who talked marriage.

"So you don't see any objections?" said Pons.

"Ah!" replied Brunner, "the girl is insignificant, the mother is a little affected,—we will see about it."

"There is a fine fortune to come," replied Pons, "more than a million —"

"Next Monday, then," interrupted the millionaire. "If you should wish to sell your collection of pictures, I am ready to give you five or six hundred thousand francs—"

"Ah!" cried the old man, who did not know he was so rich; "but I could not separate myself from that which makes my happiness.—I could only sell my collection to be delivered after my death."

"Very well, we will see—"

"There are two affairs going," thought the collector, though it was only the marriage which interested him.

Brunner saluted Pons and disappeared, carried off by his elegant equipage. Pons watched the departure of the little coupé, without noticing Rémonencq, who was smoking on the threshold of his door.

The same evening, at the house of her father-in-law, whom Madame de Marville had gone to consult, she found the Popinot family. In her desire to satisfy a small vengeance very natural in the hearts of mothers when they have not succeeded in capturing the son and heir of a family, the president's wife let it be understood that Cécile was about to make a splendid marriage. "Who is Cécile going to marry, then?" went from lip to lip. And then, not intending to betray her secrets, the president's wife gave so many hints, whispered so many confidences, which were confirmed, it may be said, by Madame Berthier, that this is what was said

the next morning in all that bourgeois empyrean in which Pons accomplished his gastronomic evolutions:

"Cécile de Marville is going to marry a young German who has made himself a banker out of pure generosity, for he is worth four millions; he is a hero of romance, a perfect Werther, charming, kind-hearted, having sown his wild oats, and is distractedly in love with Cécile; it is a love at first sight, and all the more marked because Cécile had for rivals all the painted Madonnas collected by her cousin Pons," etc., etc.

The succeeding day several persons called to compliment the president's wife, solely to ascertain if the golden goose really existed, and Madame de Marville executed a series of admirable variations on the theme, which mothers might profitably consult, as in former days people consulted the "Complete Letter-Writer:"

"No marriage is actually made," she said to Madame Chiffreville, "until you get back from the *Mairie* and the church, and so far the matter has not gone beyond the preliminaries; so that I depend upon your friendship not to speak of our hopes—"

"You are most fortunate, Madame le Président; marriages are made with great difficulty now-a-days."

"Ah! it was all done by accident; but marriages are often made in that way."

"So you are really going to marry Cécile?" said Madame Cardot.

"Yes," replied the president's wife, who fully

comprehended the spitefulness of the "really." "We were particular and it was that which delayed Cécile's establishment. But we have found all we wanted, —fortune, amiability, good character, and good looks. My dear little girl deserves them all, for that matter. Monsieur Brunner is a charming young man, very distinguished; he loves luxury, he knows life, he adores Cécile, he loves her sincerely; and notwithstanding his three or four millions, Cécile accepts him.—We did not really expect so much, but such advantages are not to be despised—" "It is not so much the fortune as the affection inspired by my daughter which has influenced us," she said to Madame Lebas. "Monsieur Brunner is so eager that he wishes the marriage to take place without any other delays than the legal ones."

"He is a stranger?—"

"Yes, madame; but I frankly admit that I am glad of it. No, it is not a son-in-law, it is a son that I shall have. M. Brunner is of a delicacy that is really delightful. You cannot think with what readiness he agreed to marry under the dotal system —that is a great security for families. He purchases for twelve hundred thousand francs the meadow-lands which will some day be reunited to Marville."

The day after, there were fresh variations on the same theme. Then M. Brunner was a grand seigneur, doing everything *en grand seigneur;* he never counted costs; and if M. de Marville could obtain for him special letters of naturalization,—and the government clearly owed the president that little

bit of patronage,—the son-in-law would become a peer of France. The exact amount of his fortune was not known, but he had "most beautiful horses and the finest equipage in all Paris," etc.

The pleasure that the Camusots took in proclaiming their hopes said only too plainly that this triumph had been unhoped for.

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Immediately after the interview in the apartments of Cousin Pons, the president, prompted by his wife, invited the Minister of Justice, his first president, and the *procureur général* to dine with him on the day of the presentation of the phœnix of sons-in-law. The three great personages accepted, although invited at short notice; for each understood the part that he was expected to play by the father of the family, and they readily came to his assistance. In France people are always very willing to help those mothers of families who fish for rich sons-in-law. The Comte and Comtesse Popinot also lent their presence to complete the glory of this occasion, although the invitation seemed to them in bad taste. There were in all eleven persons. Cécile's grandfather, the old Camusot, and his wife, were of course not absent from this reunion, which was intended, through the distinguished position of the guests, to definitely commit M. Brunner, announced as we have seen, as one of the richest capitalists in all Germany, a man of great taste, —for he loved the "little girl"—the future rival of the Nucingens, the Kellers, the du Tillets, etc.

"It is our family-day," said Madame de Marville, with well-studied simplicity, to him whom she already regarded as her son-in-law in naming to him the other guests, "we have only our intimates. First,

the father of my husband who, as you know, has been promised a peerage; then M. le Comte and Madame le Comtesse Popinot, whose son was not quite rich enough for Cécile; but we are none the less good friends; the Minister of Justice, the first president, the *procureur général*, in short, all our friends.—We shall be obliged to dine a little later than usual because of the Chamber, where the sittings never finish before six o'clock."

Brunner looked significantly at Pons, and Pons rubbed his hands, as if to say, "Such are our friends, my friends!—"

The president's wife, like a clever woman, had something particular to say to her cousin, so as to leave Cécile tête-à-tête for a moment with her Werther. Cécile chattered a good deal and managed to let Frédéric see a German dictionary and German grammar, and a Goethe, which she had hidden.

"Ah! you were studying German," said Brunner, coloring.

It takes a French woman to lay such traps.

"Oh!" said she, "aren't you wicked!—It is not fair, monsieur, to spy into my hiding-places. I do wish to read Goethe in the original," she added, "and I have studied German for the last two years."

"You must find the grammar very difficult, very hard to understand, for I see you have cut only ten pages," remarked Brunner, naïvely.

Cécile confused, turned aside to hide her blushes. A German never resists such witnesses. He

took Cécile by the hand and brought her round, all abashed under his regard, and looked at her as do the betrothed in the romances of August Lafontaine, of modest memory.

"You are adorable," said he.

Cécile made a coquettish little gesture which signified, "And you, then,—who would not love you?"

"Mamma, all goes well!" she said in the ear of her mother, who returned with Pons.

The aspect of a family on such an evening as this is not to be described. Everyone was pleased to see a mother able to lay her hand on a good marriage for her daughter. They congratulated, with words ambiguous or with a double-barreled meaning, Brunner, who feigned to understand nothing, and Cécile, who understood everything, and the president, who went about collecting compliments. All the blood of Pons rang in his ears, and he fancied he saw all the footlights of his theatre dance before him when Cécile told him in a low voice and in a most ingenious manner of her father's intentions as to the annuity of twelve hundred francs, which the old artist refused positively, giving as a reason the revelation which Brunner had made to him of the real value of his collection.

The Minister, the first president, the *procureur général*, the Popinots, all the business personages, departed. There remained only the old Camusot and Cardot, the former notary, assisted by his son-in-law Berthier. The worthy Pons, seeing himself now in the bosom of his family, thanked, very

awkwardly, M. and Madame de Marville for the offer which Cécile had just made to him. Affectionate people are all alike, always ready to yield to their first impulse. Brunner, who saw in this offer something like a bribe, felt within him a sudden return to Israelitish traits, and assumed an attitude which denoted the more than cold reverie of a calculator.

"My collection or its value will be sure to belong some day to your family, whether I sell it to our friend Brunner, or whether I keep it," said Pons, revealing to the astonished family that he was possessed of articles of so great value.

Brunner observed the revulsion of feeling shown by all these uninformed people toward a man who had just passed from a state of indigence to one of wealth, just as he had already observed the little spoilings of Cécile, the idol of the household, by her father and mother, and he conceived a sudden desire to excite still further the surprise and the exclamations of these worthy bourgeois.

"I said to mademoiselle that the pictures of M. Pons were worth that sum to me; but at the price which works of art have now attained, no one would be able to foresee the value which this collection might bring at a public sale. The sixty pictures alone would bring a million. I saw several among them worth fifty thousand francs each."

"It would be well worth while to be your heir," said the former notary to Pons.

"But my heir, that is my cousin Cécile," returned the old man, still clinging to his relationship.

A murmur of admiration for the old musician ran through the room.

"She will be a very rich heiress," said Cardot, laughing as he took leave.

Old Camusot, the father, the president and his wife, Cécile, Brunner, Berthier, and Pons, were thus left together; for it was supposed that the formal demand for the hand of Cécile would now be made. In fact, as soon as they were alone, Brunner commenced by a question which appeared to the parents of good augury.

"I am led to believe," said he, addressing Madame de Marville, "that mademoiselle is an only daughter—"

"Certainly," she answered proudly.

"You will have no difficulty with any one," said the good Pons, in order to bring Brunner to the point of formulating his demand.

Brunner became thoughtful, and a fatal silence spread through the room the strangest chill. It seemed as if the president's wife had admitted that her "little girl" was an epileptic. The president, feeling that his daughter ought not to be present, made her a sign, which Cécile understood and left the room. Brunner remained silent. The others looked at each other. The situation became embarrassing. The old Camusot, a man of experience, led the German into Madame de Marville's bed-room under pretence of showing him the fan which Pons had discovered, and, judging that some difficulty had arisen, he made a sign to his son and his

daughter-in-law, and Pons, to leave him alone with the future son-in-law.

"Here is this masterpiece," said the old silk merchant, showing the fan.

"That is worth at least five thousand francs," said Brunner, after having examined it.

"Have you not come here, monsieur," said the future peer of France, "to ask the hand of my grand-daughter?"

"Yes, monsieur," said Brunner, "I beg you to believe that no alliance could be more flattering to me. I shall never find a young lady more lovely, more amiable, and who would suit me better than Mademoiselle Cécile; but—"

"Ah, there must be no buts!" said the old Camusot, "or at least let me know at once the reason of yours, my dear sir."

"Monsieur," replied Brunner gravely, "I am very glad that no promises have been made on either side, for the fact of her being an only daughter,—a fact so precious in the eyes of the world, excepting mine, and of which I was in ignorance,— believe me, is to me an insurmountable objection—"

"How, monsieur?" said the old man, stupefied, "of so great an advantage make you a defect? Your conduct is most extraordinary, and I should much like to know your reasons for it."

"Monsieur," replied the German stolidly, "I came here this evening with the intention of asking of Monsieur le Président the hand of his daughter. I wished to give to Mademoiselle Cécile a brilliant

future in offering her all that she would consent to accept of my fortune; but an only daughter is a spoiled child who, through the indulgence of her parents, has been accustomed to having her own way, and who has never known opposition. It is here as it is in several other families in which I have formerly been able to observe the worship entertained for this species of divinity; not only is your grand-daughter the idol of the house, but even more, Madame le Président wears in it—you know what! Monsieur, I saw my father's house become from this cause, a hell. My step-mother, the cause of all my troubles, an only daughter, adored, the most charming of brides, became a devil incarnate. I have no doubt that Mademoiselle Cécile is an exception to my rule; but I am no longer a young man, I am forty years old, and the difference between our ages will occasion difficulties which will not enable me to render happy a young lady accustomed to see her mother do entirely as she likes, to whom that mother listens as if to an oracle. What right have I to require of Mademoiselle Cécile a change in all her ideas and habits? In the place of a father and mother, indulging her least caprices, she would encounter the egotism of a forty-year-old man; if she resisted, it would be the forty-year-old man who would be vanquished. I, therefore, behave like a man of honor, I withdraw. But I wish to take all the blame of this rupture upon myself, and if it is necessary to explain why I have made only one visit here—"

"If these are your reasons, monsieur," said the future peer of France, "however singular they may be, they are certainly plausible—"

"Monsieur, do not doubt my sincerity," said Brunner, interrupting him eagerly. "If you know some poor girl, one of a large family of children, well-educated, without fortune, of which there are so many in France, and if her character is such as to justify my offers, I will marry her."

During the silence which followed this declaration, Frédéric Brunner left the grandfather of Cécile, went back and saluted politely the president and the president's wife, and withdrew. A living commentary upon the escape of her Werther, Cécile appeared as pale as death; hidden in her mother's wardrobe, she had heard every word.

"Refused!" she whispered in her mother's ear.

"Why?" demanded Madame de Marville, addressing her embarrassed father-in-law.

"On the fine pretence that only daughters are spoiled children," replied the old man. "And he is not altogether wrong," added he, seizing an opportunity to blame his daughter-in-law, who had been worrying him for the last twenty years.

"My daughter will die of it! You have killed her!"—said the president's wife to Pons, supporting her daughter, who thought it becoming to justify these words by sinking into her mother's arms.

The president and his wife carried Cécile to a sofa, where she completely fainted away. The grandfather rang for the servants.

"I see the plot he has hatched!" said the furious mother, pointing to poor Pons.

Pons started up as if he had heard in his ears the trumpets of the last judgment.

"He was determined," continued the president's wife, whose eyes were like two fountains of green bile, "to repay an innocent jest by an insult. Who will ever believe that this German is in his right senses? Either he is an accomplice in an atrocious revenge, or he is crazy. I hope, Monsieur Pons, that in the future you will spare us the annoyance of seeing you in this house, to which you have tried to bring shame and dishonor."

Pons, turned to a statue, stood with his eyes on a pattern of the carpet, twirling his thumbs.

"What! you are still there, monster of ingratitude!" cried the president's wife, turning round. "We are never at home, your master nor I, whenever monsieur calls again!" said she to the servants, indicating Pons to them. "Go and fetch the doctor, Jean, and you, Madeleine, get some hartshorn!"

For the president's wife, the reasons alleged by Brunner were only a mere pretence to hide some hidden motives; but the breaking-off of the marriage was only the more certain. With the rapidity of thought which distinguishes women under extreme circumstances, Madame de Marville had found the only way of repairing the damage of such a defeat, by attributing it to premeditated vengeance on the part of Pons. This scheme, infernal as far as it concerned Pons, would redeem the honor of the

family. Through her hatred of the old man she had made of a mere female suspicion, a fact. Women in general have a particular creed, a morality of their own; they believe in the reality of everything that serves their interests and their passions. The president's wife went still further, she persuaded her husband in the course of the evening to believe as she did, and by the next morning the magistrate was fully convinced of the culpability of his cousin. Every one will think the conduct of the president's wife horrible; but under similar circumstances every mother would imitate Madame Camusot. She would much rather sacrifice the honor of a stranger than that of her daughter. The methods would change, but the object would be the same.

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The musician descended the staircase rapidly; but his step was slow along the boulevards to the theatre, which he entered mechanically; he mounted his chair mechanically, and he directed mechanically the orchestra. Between the acts he answered Schmucke so vaguely that the latter hid his fears; he thought that Pons had lost his mind. To a nature so child-like as that of Pons, the scene which had just occurred took the proportions of a catastrophe. To have aroused such a frightful hatred, where he meant to bestow happiness,—it was a total overthrow of his existence. He had recognized in the eyes, the gestures, the voice, of Madame de Marville, an implacable enmity.

The next day Madame Camusot de Marville reached a great determination, exacted by circumstances, and in which the president agreed. They resolved to give Cécile as a dot the Marville estate, the hotel in the Rue de Hanovre, and one hundred thousand francs. In the course of the morning, the president's wife went to call on the Comtesse Popinot, perceiving plainly that the only way to repair such a defeat was by an immediate marriage. She related the shocking vengeance and the frightful deception perpetrated by Pons. The story seemed plausible to the Popinots as soon as they heard that the reason given for this rupture was the character

of an only daughter. In short, the president's wife dwelt skilfully on the brilliant advantages of being styled Popinot de Marville and the enormity of the dot. At the price of land in Normandy, where it brings in two per cent, this estate represented about nine hundred thousand francs, and the Hôtel of the Rue de Hanovre was valued at two hundred and fifty thousand. No reasonable family could decline such an alliance; therefore, the Comte Popinot and his wife accepted it; then, being interested in the honor of the family into which they were now entering, they promised their concurrence in explaining the catastrophe of the previous evening.

Soon after, at the house of the same old Camusot, grandfather of Cécile, before the same persons who had been there a few days previously, and before whom the president's wife had chanted her Brunner litanies, this same president's wife, to whom every one feared to speak, bravely took the lead in explanations.

"Really in these days," she said, "it would be impossible to take too many precautions in arranging a marriage, and above all, when you have to do with foreigners."

"Why so, madame?"

"What has happened to you?" inquired Madame Chiffreville.

"You have not heard of our adventure with that Brunner who had the audacity to aspire to the hand of Cécile?—He is the son of a German

inn-keeper, the nephew of a dealer in rabbit skins."

"Is it possible? and you so cautious!" said a lady.

"These adventurers are so clever! But we have learned all through Berthier. This German has for friend a poor devil who plays the flute! He is connected with a man who keeps a common lodging-house in the Rue du Mail, with some tailors.—We have learned that he has led a vulgar life, and no fortune would suffice to a rogue who has already squandered that of his mother—"

"Well! mademoiselle, your daughter, would have been very unhappy!" said Madame Berthier.

"How did he happen to be presented to you?" inquired old Madame Lebas.

"It was a piece of revenge on the part of M. Pons; he presented this fine gentleman to us in order to overwhelm us with ridicule.—This Brunner, which means 'fountain,'—he was represented to us as a great lord—is in bad health, bald, with bad teeth; so that it was enough for me to see him only once to become suspicious of him."

"But that great fortune of which you spoke to me?" said a young woman timidly.

"The fortune is not so large as they said it was. The tailors, the lodging-house man, and he—have scraped together all they possess to start a banking-house.—What is a banking-house to-day when it commences? A mere opportunity for ruin. A woman who goes to bed a millionaire may wake up reduced

to her own means. As soon as he spoke, at the first sight we formed our opinions of this gentleman, who knows nothing of our customs. You could see by his gloves, by his waistcoat, that he was a workman, the son of a German cook-shop keeper, without nobility of feeling, a beer drinker, and who smokes!—ah, madame, fancy! twenty-five pipes a day! What would have been the fate of my poor Lili!—I still shudder at it, but God has preserved us! Moreover, Cécile did not like this man.—Could we have suspected such a scheme on the part of a relative, of a constant visitor to our house, who has dined with us twice a week for the last twenty years! whom we have loaded with benefits and who kept up the farce so well that he actually announced Cécile as his heiress before the keeper of the seals, the *procureur général*, the first president!—This Brunner and M. Pons were in league to make each other out as worth millions!—No, I assure you, all of you ladies, you would have been taken in by this deception, planned as it was by artists."

In a few weeks the reunited families of Popinot and Camusot and their adherents, had won an easy victory before the world, for no one took up the defense of the miserable Pons, the parasite, the dissembler, the niggard, the pretended good friend, now buried under contempt, regarded as a viper warmed in the bosom of families, like a man of extraordinary wickedness, a dangerous buffoon, to be forgotten as soon as possible.

About a month after the rejection of the false

Werther, poor Pons left for the first time his bed, where he had been lying a prey to nervous fever, and walked slowly along the boulevards in the sun, leaning on the arm of Schmucke. On the Boulevard du Temple nobody any longer laughed at the two Nutcrackers, at the aspect of destruction in one and of the touching solicitude of the other for his convalescent friend. By the time they had reached the Boulevard Poissonnière, Pons had recovered a little color as he breathed the atmosphere of the boulevards where the air has such a stimulating quality; for wherever a crowd congregates this fluid is so life-giving that in Rome the absence of *mala aria* has been remarked in the filthy Ghetto swarming with Jews. Perhaps also, the sight of that which heretofore gave him daily pleasure, the grand spectacle of Paris, may have had its effect upon the invalid. In front of the Théâtre des Variétés, Pons left Schmucke, for they had been walking side by side; but the convalescent quitted his friend from time to time to examine the novelties freshly exhibited in the shop-windows. He came suddenly face to face with Comte Popinot whom he greeted in the most respectful manner, the former minister being one of those men whom Pons esteemed and venerated most.

"Ah, monsieur," said the peer of France severely, "I am unable to understand how you could have so little tact as to bow to a person allied to the family you have attempted to cover with shame and ridicule by a revenge which none but an artist could have concocted.—Know, monsieur, that from this

day forth you and I are complete strangers to each other. Madame la Comtesse Popinot shares the indignation with which the world regards your conduct to the Marvilles."

The former minister passed on, leaving Pons overwhelmed. Never do the passions of men, nor justice, nor politics, never do the great social powers consider the state of the being whom they strike. The statesman, driven by family interest, to crush Pons, had not observed the physical weakness of that redoubtable enemy.

"Vat ees der madder, mein boor frent?" asked Schmucke, growing as pale as his friend himself.

"I have just received another stroke with the dagger, in the heart," replied the old man, supporting himself on Schmucke's arm. "I believe that no one but the good God has the right to do good, that is why those who meddle with His work are so cruelly punished."

This sarcasm of an artist was a supreme effort on the part of the excellent creature who wished to chase away the terror which he saw on the face of his friend.

"I dink zo," replied Schmucke, simply.

All this was incomprehensible to Pons, to whom neither the Camusots nor the Popinots had sent any information of Cécile's marriage. On the Boulevard des Italiens, Pons saw coming towards him Monsieur Cardot. Warned by the allocution of the peer of France, he was careful not to stop this personage with whom, for a year past, he dined every

fortnight, and merely bowed to him; but the mayor, the deputy of Paris, looked at Pons with an indignant air, without returning his salutation.

"Go and ask him what it is they have against me," said the old man to Schmucke, who knew in all its details the catastrophe that had happened to Pons.

"Mennesir," said Schmucke to Cardot, diplomatically, "mein frent Bons ees regovered from an eelness ant zo berhaps you gannot regognize heem."

"I recognize him perfectly."

"Denn vot haf you all against heem?"

"You have for friend a monster of ingratitude, a man who, if he still lives, it is because, as the proverb says, 'ill weeds thrive in spite of everything.' The world has good reason to be mistrustful of artists, they are malicious and spiteful as monkeys. Your friend endeavored to dishonor his own family, to destroy the reputation of a young girl, in revenge for a harmless jest. I do not wish to have the slightest relation with him; I shall endeavor to forget that I have ever known him, that he even exists. These sentiments, monsieur, are those of all my family, of his, and of all those persons who formerly offered to the Sieur Pons the honor of receiving him in their houses—"

"Bud, mennesir, you are ein reazonaple man; zo eef you vill bermit me I vill exblain der madder for you—"

"Remain his friend yourself, monsieur, if you can still find it in your heart to do so. It is free to

you," replied Cardot; "but go no further, for I warn you that I shall include in the same condemnation all those who endeavor to excuse him and to defend him."

"I joustivy heem?"

"Yes, for his conduct is unjustifiable as it cannot be qualified."

With these sentiments, the deputy of the Seine continued his route without wishing to hear another syllable.

"I have already the two powers of the State against me," said poor Pons, smiling, when Schmucke had related to him the savage denunciation.

"Eferyding ees against us," answered Schmucke mournfully. "Led us go home; zo vill ve meed no more vools."

It was the first time in his life, truly lamb-like, that Schmucke had ever uttered such words. Never had his meekness, almost divine, before been troubled; he would have smiled simply at every misfortune that had happened to him; but to see his sublime Pons ill-treated, that unrecognized Aristides, that modest genius, that soul without bitterness, that treasure of loving kindness, that heart of pure gold!—He felt all the indignation of Alceste, and he called the amphitryons of Pons "fools!" In his placid nature such emotion was equivalent to all the furies of Roland. With wise precaution he now made Pons return toward the Boulevard du Temple; and Pons allowed himself to be led; for the sick man was now in the condition of those wrestlers who can no longer count

the blows. Fate, however, willed that nothing should be lacking in the world to the calamity of the poor musician. The avalanche that rolled over him was to contain everything,—the Chamber of Peers, the Chamber of Deputies, his family, strangers, the strong, the weak, and the innocent!

On the Boulevard Poissonnière, in returning home, Pons saw coming toward him, the daughter of this same M. Cardot, a young woman who had gone through enough trouble of her own to make her merciful. Guilty of a fault kept secret, she had made herself the slave of her husband. Of all the mistresses in the houses in which he dined, Madame Berthier was the only one whom Pons ventured to address by her Christian name; he called her "Félicie," and sometimes fancied that she really understood him. This gentle creature seemed annoyed at meeting her cousin Pons; for, notwithstanding the absence of any relationship with the family of the second wife of his cousin, the old Camusot, he was always treated as cousin. Not being able to avoid him, Félicie Berthier stopped short before the dying man.

"I do not think you wicked, my cousin, but if a quarter only of what I have heard is true, you are a base man.—Oh! don't defend yourself," she added hastily, seeing Pons make a gesture. "It is useless for two reasons: the first is that I have no right to accuse, nor to judge, nor to condemn any one, knowing in myself that those who seem to be the most to blame have excuses to offer; secondly, because

your reasons will do no good. M. Berthier, who has drawn up the marriage-contract between Mademoiselle de Marville and the Vicomte Popinot, is so irritated against you that if he knew that I had said a single word to you, though it were for the last time, he would rebuke me. Every one is against you."

"I see it very plainly, madame," answered, in a broken voice, the poor old musician, bowing respectfully to the notary's wife.

And he resumed painfully his road to the Rue de Normandie, leaning on the arm of Schmucke so heavily as to betray to the old German his physical weakness, bravely combated. This third encounter was like the judgment pronounced by the Lamb which lies at the feet of God; the wrath of that angel of the poor, the symbol of the people, is the last word of heaven. The two friends reached home without having exchanged a word. In certain circumstances of life we can do no more than feel a friend at our side. Spoken consolation irritates the wound, it reveals its depths. The old pianist had, as we have seen, the genius of friendship, the delicacy of those who have suffered much, who know the habits of that suffering.

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This promenade was to be the last ever taken by the worthy Pons. The sick man fell from one illness into another. Naturally of a bilious-sanguine temperament, the bile now passed into his blood and he was seized with a violent inflammation of the liver. These two successive attacks being the only illnesses of his life, he knew no doctor; and with an intention that was excellent in the first instance, and even maternal, the sensible and devoted Madame Cibot called in the doctor of the quarter. At Paris, in every "quarter," there is a doctor whose name and residence are unknown to any but the lower class, the small bourgeois, the concierges, and who is consequently known as the doctor of the quarter. This physician who attends to childbirths and to bleeding the neighborhood, is in medicine that which is in the "Petites Affiches" the *domestique pour tout faire*, the servant of all work. Compelled to be good to the poor and sufficiently expert by reason of his long practice, he is generally beloved. Doctor Poulain, brought to the sick man by Madame Cibot, and recognized by Schmucke, listened without paying much attention to the complaints of the old musician, who had passed the night in scratching his skin, which had become insensible to the touch. The state of the eyes, suffused with yellow, was in keeping with this symptom.

"You have had within the last two days some great trouble," said the doctor to his patient.

"Alas! yes," answered Pons.

"You have the disease which monsieur here has just escaped," said the doctor, pointing to Schmucke; "the jaundice, but it will not amount to anything," he added, writing a prescription.

Notwithstanding this last word, so consoling, the doctor had given the sick man one of those Hippocratic glances in which the sentence of death, although concealed under the customary commiseration, may be always divined by those eyes which are interested in knowing the truth. Thus Madame Cibot, who darted a searching glance into the eyes of the doctor, was not misled by the tone of the professional words nor by the deceptive physiognomy of Doctor Poulain, and she followed him when he left the room.

"Do you really think it will be nothing?" she said to the doctor on the landing.

"My dear Madame Cibot, your monsieur is a dead man, not because of the invasion of his blood by his bile, but because of his moral feebleness. However, with a great deal of care, your sick man might still pull through; he would have to be taken away from here, to be induced to travel—"

"And on what?" said the concierge. "He has no money but his salary, and his friend lives on a bit of an annuity which some great ladies have given him, to whom he has, it is understood, done some service,—some very charitable ladies. They are

only two children whom I have taken care of for the last nine years."

"I have spent my life in seeing people die, not of their illnesses, but of that great and incurable wound, the want of money. In how many garrets have I been obliged, far from being paid for my visit, to leave a hundred sous on the mantelpiece!—"

"Poor, dear Monsieur Poulain," said Madame Cibot. "Ah! if you had only got the one hundred thousand livres of income of some of the skinflints of this quarter, who are nothing better nor devils let loose, you would be the very image of the good God on earth!"

The doctor who, thanks to the good will of MM. the concierges of his arrondissement, had succeeded in getting together a little practice which scarcely sufficed his needs, raised his eyes to heaven and thanked Madame Cibot with an expression worthy of Tartuffe.

"You say, then, my dear M. Poulain, that with a great deal of care, our patient may get over it?"

"Yes, if he is not too much affected in his moral system by the trouble which he has experienced."

"Poor man, what can have troubled him? There ain't no better than he, who has no equal on earth except his friend, M. Schmucke!—I'll find out what's upset him! and it's I who will see that they get well drubbed who have bled my gentleman—"

"Listen to me, my dear Madame Cibot," said the doctor, who was now on the step of the porte cochère, "one of the chief symptoms of the disease

your gentleman has is a constant anxiety about mere nothings, and as it is not likely that he can have a nurse, it is you who will have to take care of him. Therefore—"

"Eet ees of Moucheu Ponche zat you speek?" asked the dealer in old iron-work, who was smoking his pipe.

And he rose from his seat on the door-step to take part in the conversation of the concierge and the doctor.

"Yes, Papa Rémonencq," replied Madame Cibot to the Auvergnat.

"Vel, then, he is more riche than Moucheu Monichtrolle and all ze uzzer curiochite men. I knows enough about these artistique zings to tell you zat ze tear man has much richeness!"

"Goodness! I thought you were making fun of me the other day when I showed you all them antiquities while my gentlemen were out," said Madame Cibot to Rémonencq.

At Paris, where the pavements have ears, and the doors have tongues, and the window-shutters eyes, nothing is more dangerous than to talk in a porte cochère. The last words exchanged there, and which are to the conversation what a postscript is to a letter, contain indiscretions as dangerous for those who let them be heard as for those who hear them. A single example will suffice to corroborate that case which this history presents.

One day, one of the chief hair-dressers in the days of the Empire, a period when people bestowed

much care upon their hair, issued from a house in which he had just been dressing the hair of a pretty woman, and in which he had the custom of all the rich tenants. Among these flourished an old bachelor, protected by an old housekeeper, who detested all the heirs of her gentleman. The *ci-devant* young man fell seriously ill, and became the subject of a consultation of all the most famous physicians, who did not as yet call themselves "the princes of science." Leaving the house accidentally at the same time as the hair-dresser, these doctors, in bidding each other good-bye on the step of the porte cochère, were talking truth and science openly, as they do between themselves when the farce of the consultation is over. "He is a dead man," said Doctor Haudry. "He has not a month to live," added Desplein, "unless indeed by a miracle." The hair-dresser heard these words. Like all hair-dressers, he had an understanding with the servants. Impelled by a monstrous cupidity, he remounted promptly to the apartments of the old bachelor, and he promised to the servant-mistress a very handsome premium if she could decide her master to invest the greater part of his fortune in an annuity. In the property of this dying old bachelor, who had seen fifty-six years,—and who might have counted them double because of his amorous campaigns,—there was a magnificent house situated in the Rue de Richelieu, worth at that time about two hundred and fifty thousand francs. This house, the object of the covetousness of the hair-dresser, was sold to

him for an annuity of thirty thousand francs. All this took place in 1806. The hair-dresser, retired from business, now a septuagenarian, is still paying the annuity in 1846, as the *ci-devant* young man is now ninety-six, is quite childish, and has married his Madame Évrard, and may last a long time yet. The hair-dresser having given thirty thousand francs to the servant, finds that this piece of landed property has cost him over a million; but the house to-day is worth from eight to nine hundred thousand francs.

In imitation of this hair-dresser, the Auvergnat had overheard the last words said by Brunner and Pons on the steps of his doorway, the day of the interview of the fiancé phœnix with Cécile; he had therefore conceived the desire to see Pons's museum. As he lived on good terms with the Cibots, he was soon afterward introduced into the apartment of the two friends during their absence. Dazzled by such treasures, he saw a *coup à monter*, which means in dealer's slang, "a fortune to steal," and he had been thinking over this project for the last five or six days.

"I do not choke," he replied to Madame Cibot and the doctor. "Let us talk apout it, and eef this goot chentleman would like an annooity of fifty thousand franques, I vil go you a hamber of wine eef you—"

"What are you thinking of?" said the doctor to Rémonencq, "fifty thousand francs annuity!—But if the good man is as rich as that, is doctored by

me, and cared for by Madame Cibot, he may get well—for liver complaints are the inconvenient accompaniments of every good constitution—"

"Dit I say fifty? Vhy a chentleman on those very stebs that you are standing on brobosed to bay him a hundret and fifty tousand franques, and that for the bictures alone, py tam!"

Hearing this assertion of Rémonencq, Madame Cibot looked at Doctor Poulain with a strange expression. The devil lit up a sinister fire in her orange-colored eyes.

"Come, do not let us listen to such idle tales," said the doctor, sufficiently pleased to know that his patient would be able to pay for all the visits that he might make to him.

"Moucheu le doucteurre, eef my tear Madame Chibot, now that the chentleman is in his bet, will let me pring an egspairt to eggsamine the arteecles, I am zhure that I could fint tee moneys in two hours, even eef it comes to tees hundret and fifty thousand franques—"

"Good, my friend!" said the doctor. "Be sure, Madame Cibot, to be careful not to contradict the sick man; you will have to be very patient, for everything will irritate him and fatigue him, even your attentions; you must make up your mind that nothing will please him—"

"It will be mighty difficult," said the concierge.

"See here, listen to me," resumed the doctor, with an authoritative air, "the life of M. Pons is in the hands of those who take care of him; therefore

I shall come and see him perhaps twice every day. I shall commence my rounds here—"

The doctor had suddenly passed from the profound indifference which he felt for the fate of his sick poor to a solicitude the most tender, as he recognized the possibility of the wealth so much insisted upon by the speculative dealer.

"He shall be taken care of like a king," replied Madame Cibot with a sham enthusiasm.

The concierge waited until the doctor had turned the corner of the Rue Charlot before resuming the conversation with Rémonencq. The dealer in iron was finishing his pipe, his back supported against the casing of the door of his shop. He had not taken this position without design; he wished to compel her to come to him.

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This shop, formerly used as a café, remained just as it was when the Auvergnat first hired it. The words "Café de Normandie," might still be read on the long sign which is placed above the windows in all modern shops. The Auvergnat had had painted, probably gratuitously, with a brush and some black paint by some house-painter's apprentice, in the space which was left under the name "Café de Normandie,"—"Rémonencq, dealer in old ironware, buys second-hand merchandise." Of course the mirrors, the tables, the stools, the sideboards, all the furniture of the Café de Normandie, had been sold. Rémonencq had hired for six hundred francs a shop completely empty, the back shop, a kitchen, and a single chamber in the entresol, where the head-waiter had formerly slept, for the apartments dependent upon the Café de Normandie were situated elsewhere. Of the primitive luxury once displayed by the restaurant-keeper, nothing remained but a plain, light-green paper on the walls of the shop, and the strong iron bars and bolts of the shop window.

Established here in 1831, after the Revolution of July, Rémonencq commenced by displaying cracked bells, dented pans, old iron-work, ancient scales, the out-of-date weights, now discarded by the law relating to the new weights and measures,—which

the government alone does not obey, for it still leaves in circulation one and two-sou pieces which date from the reign of Louis XVI. Then this Auvergnat, of the capacity of five Auvergnats, bought kitchen utensils, old frames, old brasses, chipped porcelains. Gradually, by dint of emptying and replenishing, the shop had grown to resemble the farces of Nicolet, the character of the merchandise had improved. The iron merchant followed that prodigious and sure game of doubling his effects at each deal, so that the result soon manifested itself to the eyes of those loungers sufficiently philosophical to study the progressive growth in value of the articles which garnish these intelligent shops. To the tinned iron, to the argand lamps, to the potsherds, succeed brasses and frames. After these come porcelains. Soon the shop, temporarily changed into a *croutéum*, i. e., filled with wretched paintings, develops into a museum. Finally, one day, the dusty window-panes are cleaned, the interior is restored, the Auvergnat abandons his velveteen and his waistcoat, and takes to wearing coats! he is to be seen like a dragon guarding his treasures; he is surrounded by masterpieces, he has grown to be a keen connoisseur, he has increased his capital ten-fold, and can no longer be taken in by any trick; he knows all the practices of the trade. The monster is there, like an old woman, in the middle of twenty young girls whom she offers to the public. The beauty, the miracles of art, are nothing to this man, at once gross

and cultivated, who calculates his profits and imposes on the ignorant. He becomes a comedian; he affects attachment to his canvases, to his marquetries, or he feigns poverty, or he invents cost prices and offers to show the bill of sale. He is a Proteus, he is in the same hour Jocrisse, Janot, merry-andrew, or Mondor, or Harpagon, or Nicodemus.

In the course of the third year, there might be seen in Rémonencq's shop, handsome clocks, armor, and old pictures; and he caused his establishment to be guarded during his absences by a stout woman, excessively ugly, his sister, who had come from his own country on foot, at his request. The female Rémonencq, a species of idiot, with a vague eye, and dressed like a Japanese idol, never abated one centime of the price which her brother instructed her to ask; she also took charge of the housekeeping, and solved the problem, apparently insoluble, of sustaining life solely on the fogs of the Seine. Rémonencq and his sister lived on bread and herrings, on pickings, on the scraps of vegetables gathered out of the waste stuff left by the restaurant keepers at the corners of their premises. For both, they did not spend, bread included, more than twelve sous a day, and the woman sewed or spun to earn them.

This development of a business in the case of Rémonencq, who originally came to Paris to be a public messenger and who from 1825 to 1831 ran errands for the curiosity-dealers of the Boulevard

Beaumarchais and the coppersmiths of the Rue de Lappe, is the normal history of most of the bric-à-brac dealers. The Jews, the Normans, the Auvergnats, the Savoyards—these four races of men have the same instincts, they make their fortunes by the same means. To spend nothing, to gain by slight profits, and to accumulate interest and profits, such is their code, and this code has now become a charter.

At this period, Rémonencq, reconciled with his former employer, Monistrol, having connection with the important dealers, devoted himself to *chiner* —which is the technical slang—in the suburbs of Paris, which, as you know, cover a radius of some forty leagues. After fourteen years of such traffic, he was possessed of a fortune of sixty thousand francs and a shop very well filled. His varying profits in the Rue de Normandie were few, but the lowness of the rent retained him there; he sold his gatherings to the larger dealers, and was satisfied with a moderate profit. All his business was transacted in the Auvergne patois, called *charabia*. This man nourished a dream! He desired to be able to establish himself on the boulevards; he wished to become a rich dealer in curiosities, and to come directly in contact with the amateurs. He had it in him, moreover, to become a redoubtable trader. His face was always covered with a dusty coating produced by iron filings mixed with perspiration, for he did everything himself; this rendered his physiognomy all the more inscrutable, as the habit

of physical endurance had endowed with a stoic impassibility the old soldiers of 1799. In person, Rémonencq was a short, thin man, whose little eyes, set in his head like those of a pig, revealed in their cold blue the concentrated greed, the craftiness of the Jews, without their apparent humility, which covers the profound contempt they feel for Christians.

The relations between the Cibots and the Rémonencqs were those of benefactor and beneficiary. Madame Cibot, convinced of the excessive poverty of the Auvergnats, sold to them at ridiculous prices the remnants from the tables of Schmucke and Cibot. Rémonencq paid for a pound of dried crusts and crumbs of bread, two centimes and a half, and one centime and a half for a pan of potatoes, etc. The crafty Rémonencq was supposed to do no business on his own account. He always claimed to represent Monistrol, and declared that he was a prey to the rich dealers; consequently the Cibots sincerely pitied the Rémonencqs. In eleven years the Auvergnat had never worn out the velveteen jacket, the velveteen trousers, and the velveteen waistcoat which he regularly wore; but these three garments, sacred to Auvergnats, were riddled with patches put in gratis by Cibot. As may be seen, all Jews are not Israelites.

"Weren't you making fun of me, Rémonencq," said the concierge, "could it be that M. Pons has such a fortune and live the life he does? He has not one hundred francs about him!—"

"Amateurs are always like zat," answered Rémonencq sententiously.

"You don't believe, not really, that my gentleman has got seven hundred thousand francs?"

"Nootheengs less zan zat in the pictures alone. He's got one of zem zat I'd pay him feefty dhousand franques for, even eef eet strangled me to do eet. You know zose leetle prass frames enamelled with red velvet eenside them, in which aire bortraits? Vary well, zey aire enamels by Petitotte, zat Moucheu le Minichtre du Gouvarnemente, who was once a druccist, pays one dhousand crowns apiece for."

"There are thirty of them in the two frames!" said the concierge, with her eyes dilating.

"Vary well, you can chudge zen yoursalf of hees dreasure!"

Madame Cibot, seized with dizziness, turned round about. She conceived in that moment the idea of worming herself into the testament of the worthy Pons, in imitation of those servant-mistresses whose annuities had excited so much cupidity in the quarter of the Marais. Already she saw herself living in the commune, in the suburbs of Paris, strutting about in a country-house, where she looked after her poultry-yard and her garden, and where she would finish her days served like a queen, as well as her poor Cibot, who deserved so much happiness, as do all neglected and misinterpreted angels.

In the abrupt and involuntary movement of Madame Cibot, Rémonencq saw a certainty of success. In the trade of the *chineur*—such is the slang

name for the collectors of second-hand treasures, from the verb *chiner*, to go in quest of old things, and to drive sharp bargains with their ignorant possessors;—in this trade the first difficulty is to get into houses. It is difficult to conceive all the ruses à la Scapin, the tricks à la Sganarelle, and the seductions à la Dorine which the *chineurs* invent in order to enter the house of the bourgeois. It is a comedy worthy of the theatre, and is always based, as in this case, on the rapacity of servants. For thirty pieces of silver or a few wares, servants, and above all, those in the country or in provincial towns, will help the *chineur* to bargains which often bring him in a profit of one thousand or two thousand francs. There is a certain service of old Sèvres, pâte tendre, whose capture, if related, would equal all the diplomatic craftiness of the Congress of Munster, all of the intelligence displayed at Nimeguen, Utrecht, Ryswick, or Vienna, —which indeed is often surpassed by the *chineurs*, whose comedy is far more frank than that of the diplomatists. The *chineurs* have means of action which dive quite as deeply into the depths of personal interest as those so laboriously sought for by ambassadors, to break up the most solid alliances.

"I vinely stirred up zat Chibot woman," said the brother to the sister, as she returned to take her place on a broken straw chair; "and now I am going to gonsult ze only man who ees up to such dings,—our Chew, a goot Chew, who won't douch anyding under feefteen per chent."

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Rémonencq had read Madame Cibot's heart. In women of her character, to will is to act; they stick at nothing to attain success; they pass instantaneously from the strictest integrity to the most flagrant dishonesty. Honesty, like all our other sentiments, for that matter, must be divided into two honesties—a positive and a negative honesty. The negative honesty is that of the Cibots, who are upright so long as they meet with no opportunity to enrich themselves. Positive honesty is that which remains in temptation always up to the thighs without ever yielding to it, like that of the receiving teller. A whole crowd of evil intentions rushed into the intelligence and into the heart of this concierge when the flood-gates of self-interest were set open by the devilish suggestion of the old-iron merchant. Madame Cibot went up, flew up, to speak accurately, from the lodge to the apartment of her two gentlemen, and presented herself, with a face of assumed tenderness, on the threshold of the chamber where Pons and Schmucke were lamenting. As he saw the housekeeper enter, Schmucke made a sign to her to say nothing before the patient of the doctor's real opinion; for this friend, this devoted German, had read the truth in the doctor's eyes. Madame Cibot answered by another sign of the head, expressive of the deepest grief.

"Well, my dear gentleman, how do you feel?" said she.

The concierge took her stand at the foot of the bed, her fists on her hips, and her eyes fixed lovingly upon the sick man—but what sparks of gold flashed up in these eyes! It was as terrible as the glance of a tiger to an observer.

"Very badly," answered the poor Pons. "I have not the least appetite—Ah! what a world it is," he cried, pressing the hand of Schmucke, who, seated beside his pillow, held his friend's, and with whom doubtless the invalid had been speaking of the causes of his illness. "I would have done much better, my good Schmucke, if I had followed your advice! if I had dined here every day since our union! if I had renounced that society which rolls over me like a tumbrel over an egg, and why?—"

"Come, come, my good monsieur, don't be so gloomy," said Madame Cibot. "The doctor has told me the truth—"

Schmucke twitched her dress.

"And you can get over it, but you must have a great lot of care. You can be easy; haven't you got a very good friend and, not to praise myself too much, a woman as will nurse you just like a mother nurses her first baby? I pulled Cibot through a sickness when M. Poulain said he was done for, and had put the weights, as they say, on his eyes, and gave him up for dead!—Now, you ain't nearly so bad as that, God be praised, although you are pretty sick, but you trust me—I'll pull you through all

by my own self! Be easy and don't fidget that way."

She drew the bed-clothes over the sick man's hands.

"Don't you never worry, my boy," said she, "M. Schmucke and I, we'll sit up all night with you here at your bedside—You'll be nursed better nor a prince;—and besides, ain't you rich enough to be able to have everything that is necessary for your sickness—I have arranged all that with Cibot; poor dear man, what will he do without me!—All the same, I've made him listen to reason, and we both love you so much that he has consented that I should stay up here at nights—And for a man like him, that's a mighty sacrifice, be sure, for he loves me as he did the first day. I don't know why he is so! it's living in that lodge! always side by side!—Don't uncover yourself like that," she cried, darting to the head of the bed and pulling the bed-clothes over Pons's chest. "If you don't behave nicely, and if you don't do all that M. Poulain orders for you, and he is the image of the good God on earth, I won't take any care of you—You will have to mind me—"

"Yez, Montame Zipod, he vill opey you, for he vill dry to lif for hees goot frent Schmucke, I gan bromise dat."

"And above all, you mustn't get impatient," went on Madame Cibot, "for your sickness will make you enough so without your making no worse your natural want of patience. God sends us our

troubles, my dear, good monsieur, he punishes us for our faults; haven't you got no nice little dear faults to reproach yourself with?—"

The sick man shook his head negatively.

"Oh, come on, you have never loved no one when you were young? you have never done no foolishness? you have not perhaps somewheres a love-child that hasn't got no bread, no fire, no home?—You monsters of men!—you love a person one day and then say, whist!—you don't think no more of anything, not even of paying for a month's nursing!—Poor women!—"

"But there was no one but Schmucke and my poor mother who ever loved me," said poor Pons, sadly.

"Nonsense, you're not no saint! Weren't you never young—and you must have been a very pretty fellow at twenty—I would have loved you myself, good as you are—"

"I was always as ugly as a toad—" said Pons despairingly.

"You say that for modesty. You have that to be said in your favor, anyhow, that you are modest."

"No, no, my dear Madame Cibot, I repeat it to you, I was always ugly, and I have never been loved—"

"I like that—you, indeed!" she said. "You would try to make me believe at this time that you are as innocent as a babe unborn—A man of your kind, a musician, a theatre man! Why, if it was a woman that told me so I shouldn't believe her."

"Montame Zipod, you moost not irridade heem!" cried Schmucke as he saw poor Pons writhing, like a worm, in his bed.

"Now you hold your tongue! You are both of you two old rakes—Suppose you ain't very good-looking, there ain't no ugly cover that hasn't its pot! as the proverb says! Cibot made the handsomest oyster-woman in all Paris love him—and you are a deal better-looking than he—You are very good, you!—Go along, you played your little games!—and God punishes you for having deserted your children like Abraham!—"

The sick man, overwhelmed, found strength to make another gesture of denial.

"But don't worry, that won't prevent you living to be as old as Methusalem."

"But will you let me alone!" cried Pons. "I never knew what it was to be loved!—I have no children, I am alone upon the earth—"

"No, is that so?—" said the concierge, "for you are so good, and the women, don't you know, love goodness, that's what makes them like you; —and it seems to me impossible that in your best days—"

"Take her away!" said Pons in Schmucke's ear. "She worries me."

"Monsieur Schmucke, then, he has some children —You are all like that, you old bachelors—"

"I," exclaimed Schmucke, jumping on his feet, "but—"

"Oh, come, you also—you haven't got no heirs,

haven't you? You have come up, both of you, like mushrooms out of the ground—"

"Gome, go along," replied Schmucke.

The good German took Madame Cibot heroically by the waist and dragged her from the room in spite of her cries.

"You wouldn't wish to, at your age, abuse a poor woman!—" cried she, struggling in Schmucke's arms.

"Toan'd sgreem!"

"You, the best of the two!" she replied. "Ah! I did wrong to talk of love to two old fellows who have never known any woman! I have made you all hot, monster," she cried, seeing that Schmucke's eyes sparkled with anger. "Help! help! I am being carried away."

"You are ein vool," answered the German. "Dell me vat has ze togdor zaid?"

"You treat me brutally," said Madame Cibot, sobbing, as soon as she was released, "I who would go through fire and water for you two! Ah, well! they say that men show what they are in time—How true it is! My poor Cibot would never have used me so—I who behaved like a mother to you; for I hain't got no children, and I was saying yesterday, yes, no later nor yesterday, to Cibot: 'My love, God knew what he was a-doing when he wouldn't let us have no children, for I have got two babies upstairs!' There! by the Holy Cross of the good God, by the soul of my mother, that's just what I said to him—"

"Put vat has ze togdor zaid," demanded

Schmucke, and for the first time in his life he stamped his foot.

"Well, he said," replied Madame Cibot, drawing Schmucke into the dining-room, "he said that our dearly-beloved darling was in danger of dying if he did not have the best of care; but I am here in spite of your brutality; for you are brutal, you whom I took to be so gentle. Is that the kind of man you are?—Ah! you would go to insult a woman at your age, you old scoundrel?—"

"Sgountrel! I! Toan'd you know I gan no von lofe only Bons!"

"Well, that's all right, you will let me alone, won't you?" she answered, smiling at Schmucke. "You'd better, for Cibot would break any one's bones who insulted his honor!"

"Dake goot gare of heem, my leedle Montame Zipod," returned Schmucke, trying to take Madame Cibot's hand.

"There! do you see, you are at it again!"

"Leesten to me! All I haf ees yours eef zo be as ve gan zave heem."

"Well, well, I will go to the apothecary and get what's wanted;—for you see, monsieur, this sickness is going to cost you a good deal; and how will you arrange that?—"

"I vill vork. It moost pe dat Bons moost pe gared for lige a brince."

"He shall be, my good Monsieur Schmucke; and don't you fret about nothing. Cibot and I, we got two thousand francs of savings. They are all yours,

and it's a long time since I have spent anything of my own here, now!—"

"Goot vooman," cried Schmucke, wiping his eyes. "Vat a heart zhe has!"

"Dry those eyes that honor me, for they are my reward!" cried the Cibot melodramatically. "There ain't a more disinterested creature nor I am; but don't you go on in that way, with your eyes crying, for Monsieur Pons will think that he is sicker nor he is."

Schmucke, touched by this delicacy, finally got hold of her hand and pressed it.

"Do not spare me!" said the former oyster-woman, throwing Schmucke a tender glance.

"Bons," said the good German, going back to his friend, "zhe is ein anchel,—a jaddering anchel, put ein anchel all ze zame."

"Do you think so?—I have grown suspicious of everyone this last month," replied the sick man shaking his head. "After all my troubles it is hard to believe in anything but in God and you!—"

"Get vell, ant ve vill all dree leef togedder lige kings," replied Schmucke.

"Cibot," cried his wife, out of breath, rushing into the porter's lodge. "Ah! my dear, our fortune is made. My two gentlemen haven't got no heirs, and no natural children, and no nothing whatever!—Oh! I am going to Mame Fontaine's to get her to tell our fortune on the cards to see how much money we are to get!—"

"My wife," replied the little tailor, "don't depend upon the shoes of a dead man to be well shod."

"Ah, there! are you going to plague me, you!" she said, giving her husband a friendly tap. "I know what I know. M. Poulain has said that M. Pons is going to die! And we shall be rich! I shall be put in the will!—I will take good care of that. You stitch away here and watch the lodge, you won't be much longer at this trade! We will retire into the country somewhere around Batignolles. A handsome house, a fine garden, which you will love to work in, and I will have a servant!—"

"Vell, vell! neighpor, how are dey cetting on upstairs?" asked Rémonencq. "Haave you fount out yet vat dat gollection is vorth?—"

"No, no, not yet. You can't get on as fast as that, my good man. I, I began by finding out something much more important—"

"More imbordant?" cried Rémonencq, "but vat is more imbordant dan dees ding?—"

"Come, come, my lad, you let me sail the ship," said Madame Cibot, domineeringly.

"But dirty per chent. on dat one hundret dousand franques is word enuffe to maik you leeve like a pourgeois for tee resd of your dayz—"

"Don't you worry, Papa Rémonencq, when it is necessary to know what all those things the old fellow has picked up are worth, we will see to it—"

And Madame Cibot, after going to the apothecary's to get the doctor's prescription made up, put

off till to-morrow her consultation with Madame Fontaine, figuring that she should find the faculties of the oracle more crisp, more fresh, in the early morning, before the crowd arrived; for there was often a crowd at Madame Fontaine's.

*

After having been, during forty years, the rival of the celebrated Mademoiselle Lenormand, whom she survived, Madame Fontaine was at the present time the oracle of the Marais. It is not generally known what the fortune-tellers are among the lower classes in Paris, nor the immense influence they exert over the decision of uneducated persons; for the cooks, the concierges, the kept mistresses, work-people, all those who in Paris live on hope, consult the privileged beings who possess the strange and inexplicable power of reading the future. The belief in occult sciences is far more widely spread than the scientists, the lawyers, the notaries, the doctors, the magistrates, and the philosophers imagine. The people have ineradicable instincts. Among these instincts, the one so foolishly called *superstition* is as much in their blood as it is in the brains of their superiors. More than one statesman in Paris consult the fortune-tellers. To the incredulous, judicial astrology—a most grotesque conjunction of words—is nothing more than the exploitation of an innate sentiment, one of the strongest in our nature, curiosity. The incredulous deny positively the relation that divination establishes between human destiny and the configurations which are obtained by the seven or eight principal methods which compose judicial astrology. But it is with

the occult sciences as it has been with so many natural phenomena ignored by the more intelligent or by the materialistic philosophers, that is to say, all those who hold exclusively to visible and solid facts, to those results obtained by the retort, or the scales of physics and of modern chemistry; these sciences nevertheless exist, they continue to advance without making much progress, for in the last two centuries their culture has been abandoned by finer minds.

In considering only the possible side of divination, to believe that the past events of a man's life, that the secrets known to him alone, can be instantly revealed by the cards which he shuffles and cuts, and which the reader of his horoscope divides, according to some mysterious rules, into various little packs, is an absurdity; but steam was condemned as an absurdity, and so is to-day aërial navigation, so was the invention of gun-powder, and of printing, that of spectacles, the art of engraving, and the last great invention—the daguerreotype. If any one had gone to Napoleon and told him that a building or a man is represented at all moments, and perpetually, by an image in the atmosphere; that all existing objects have within that atmosphere a perceptible and obtainable spectre, he would have sent that man to Charenton, just as Richelieu put Salomon de Caux in the Bicêtre, when that Norman martyr offered him the vast conquest of steam navigation. And that is, nevertheless, that which Daguerre has proved by his discovery! Very well,

if God has imprinted for certain clear-seeing eyes the destiny of every man upon his physiognomy, meaning by that word the expression of his whole body, why should not the hand resume in itself all that physiognomy, since the hand is the whole of human action and its sole means of manifestation? Hence chiromancy. Does not society imitate God? To predict to a man the coming events of his life by the aspect of his hand is a feat not any more extraordinary to those who have received the faculties of a seer than it is to say to a soldier that he will fight, to a lawyer that he will speak, to the shoemaker that he will make shoes or boots, to the husbandman that he will manure the earth and till it. Let us take a striking instance. Genius is so visible in man that when he walks through the streets of Paris a great artist is recognized by the most ignorant people. It is like a spiritual sun whose rays light up all around him as he passes. Is not an imbecile also immediately recognized by the contrary impressions to those which the man of genius produces? Commonplace men pass almost unperceived. The greater part of the observers of social and Parisian human nature can tell at a glance the profession of a man who passes them in the street. To-day the mysteries of the witch's Sabbat, so fully pictured by the painters of the sixteenth century, are mysteries no longer. The Egyptian sorcerers, male and female, progenitors of the gypsies of Bohemia, that strange race coming from India, simply made their votaries eat hashish.

The phenomena produced by that drug explain amply the riding on broomsticks, the flight up the chimneys, the real *visions*, so to speak, of old women changed into young ones, the frenzied dances and the entrancing music which compose the fantastic devotions of the pretended worshipers of the devil.

To-day so many authentic and established facts have come to light by means of the occult sciences that some day these sciences will be taught, just as now we teach chemistry and astronomy. It is even singular that at this moment, when they are creating in Paris professors of the Slav, of the Mantchoo, of literatures as unacademic as the literatures of the North, which, instead of furnishing lessons should receive them, and of which the nominal professors repeat eternal dissertations upon Shakespeare or upon the sixteenth century,—that they have not revived under the name of anthropology, the teaching of occult philosophy, one of the glories of the ancient University. In this, Germany, that nation at once so great and so infantile, has gone further than France, for there they profess this science, a much more useful one than the various PHILOSOPHIES which are, in point of fact, all the same thing.

That certain created beings should have the power of foreseeing events in the germ of causes, just as the great inventor perceives an art or science in some natural phenomenon unobserved by the ordinary mind, this is not one of those violent exceptions to the order of things which excite unthinking clamor; it is simply the working of a recognized

faculty, and of one which is in some measure the somnambulism of the spirit. This proposition, on which rest all the various methods of deciphering the future, may seem absurd,—but the fact remains. Observe also that to predict the great events of the future is not, for the seer, any greater exhibition of power than that of revealing the secrets of the past. The past and the future are equally unknown in the system of the incredulous. If past events have left their traces, it is reasonable to infer that coming ones have their roots. Whenever a soothsayer tells you, minutely, facts of your past life known to yourself alone, he can surely tell you of events which existing causes will produce. The moral world is cut out, so to speak, on the pattern of the material world; the same effects may be found in it, with the differences proper to their varied environments. Thus, just as the body is actually projected into the atmosphere and leaves in it existing the spectre seized by the daguerreotype which arrested it in its passage; so ideas, real and potential creations, imprint themselves upon what we must call the atmosphere of the spiritual world, produce effects upon it, remain there spectrally,—it is necessary to coin words to express these unknown phenomena,—and hence certain created beings, endowed with rare faculties, can clearly perceive these forms or these traces of thoughts or ideas.

As to the means employed to obtain *visions*, these are, of all these marvels, those which are most readily explained, as soon as the hand of the

inquirer has arranged the objects by the aid of which he is to be shown the happenings of his life. In fact, all things are linked together in the real world. Every motion in it corresponds to a cause, every cause is a part of the whole; consequently, the whole is represented in the slightest movement. Rabelais, the greatest mind of modern humanity, this man who combined within himself Pythagoras, Hippocrates, Aristophanes, and Dante, declared three centuries ago "man is a microcosm." Three centuries later, Swedenborg, the great Swedish prophet, said that the earth was a man. The prophet and the precursor of scepticism thus met upon the ground of this greatest of all formulas. All things are predestined in human life, as in the life of our planet. The slightest accidents, the most futile, are regulated by law. Consequently, the great events, the great designs, the great thoughts, have their necessary reflex in the least actions, and with so much fidelity that if some conspirator were to shuffle and cut a pack of cards he would write, in so doing, the secret of his conspiracy to be read by the seer, otherwise called Bohemian, fortune-teller, charlatan, etc. As soon as we admit necessity, that is to say, the connection of causes, judicial astrology exists and becomes that which it once was—a vast science, for it comprises the faculty of deduction which made Cuvier so great; but spontaneous, instead of being, as in the case of that fine genius, exercised only on studious nights, in the depths of his own cabinet.

Judicial astrology, divination, reigned for seven centuries, not as to-day over the common people, but over the loftiest intelligences, over sovereigns, queens, and the wealthy. One of the greatest sciences of antiquity, animal magnetism, survived from the occult sciences, just as chemistry issued from the retorts of the alchemists. Phrenology, the science of physiognomy, neurology, are also derived from it; and the illustrious creators of these sciences, apparently so novel, have made but one error—that of all inventors—and which consists in generalizing absolutely from isolated facts whose generating cause still escapes analysis. There came a day when the Church and modern philosophy found themselves in accord with the law, to proscribe, persecute, and ridicule the mysteries of the Kabala and its adepts, and there ensued a regrettable gap of one hundred years in the supremacy and the study of the occult sciences. Nevertheless, the people, and many persons of intelligence, women especially, continue to pay their contributions to the mysterious power of those who are able to lift the veil of the future; they go to them to purchase hope, courage, strength, in other words, that which religion alone can give them. So this science is still constantly practised, not without certain risks. In our day, the sorcerers, guaranteed against torture by the tolerance won by the encyclopedists of the eighteenth century, are now only answerable to the correctional police, and in those cases only in which they practise fraud, when they terrify their clients

for the purpose of extorting money,—offenses which come under the charge of swindling. Unfortunately, such swindling, and often actual crime, accompany the exercise of this sublime faculty. For this reason:

The admirable gifts which make the seer are usually met with among those we characterize as brutish. These brutes are the chosen vessels in which God has poured the elixirs which surprise humanity. These brutes furnish the prophets, the Saint Peters, the Hermit. Whenever thought can be kept in its integrity, in its completeness, not frittered away in conversation, in intrigues, in literary work, in the speculations of the scientists, in administrative efforts, in the conceptions of the inventor, in warlike works, it is apt to burn with fire of a prodigious intensity, just as the uncut diamond contains all the sparkle of its facets. Let the occasion arrive, this intelligence at once lights up, it has wings to waft it over space, divine eyes to perceive everything; yesterday it was carbon; to-morrow, under the flooding of the mysterious fluid which pervades it, it is a diamond which glitters. Men of superior mind with all the facets of their intellect well-worn, can never, without at least one of those miracles which God permits himself sometimes, offer this supreme power. Thus it happens that the diviners, male and female, are nearly always mendicants with uncultured minds, beings apparently of coarse fibre, pebbles rolled in the torrents of poverty, in the ruts of existence,

where they have expended only physical suffering. The prophet, the seer, is in fact, Martin the laborer, who made Louis XVIII. tremble by telling to him a secret known only to the king; it is a Mademoiselle Lenormand, a cook like Madame Fontaine, some half-idiotic negress, some herdsman living among his horned beasts, a fakir sitting at the edge of a pagoda and who, by killing the flesh, has won for the spirit all the unknown powers of somnambulic faculties.

It is in Asia that from all time have been found the heroes of the occult sciences. It often happens that these individuals who in their ordinary lives remain their ordinary selves,—for they fulfill, as it were, the chemical and physical functions of the conducting mediums of an electric current, alternately inert metal and canals full of mysterious fluids,—these individuals, sinking back into their natural condition, betake themselves to practices and schemes which bring them under the power of the police, and find themselves, as in the case of the famous Balthazar, before the Assize Court or in the galleys. In fine, a proof of the immense power which cartomancy exercises over the lower orders may be found in the fact that the life or death of our poor musician depended on the horoscope which Madame Fontaine was about to draw for Madame Cibot.

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Though certain repetitions are inevitable in so extensive a work and one so full of detail as a complete history of French society in the nineteenth century, it is unnecessary to paint here the den of Madame Fontaine, already described in *The Involuntary Comedians*. Only, however, it is necessary to observe that Madame Cibot went into Madame Fontaine's in the Rue Vieille-du-Temple, very much as the habitues of the Café Anglais enter that restaurant to breakfast. Madame Cibot, a very old customer, often brought her young people and the gossips of the neighborhood, devoured by curiosity.

The old servant who served as an usher to the fortune-teller, opened the door of the sanctuary without giving notice to her mistress.

"It is Madame Cibot!—Walk in," she added, "there is no one here."

"Well, my little one, what has brought you out so early?" asked the sorceress.

Madame Fontaine, then sixty-eight years of age, merited this qualification by her personal appearance, worthy of one of the Parcæ.

"I am all upside down, give me the Grand Deal," cried the Cibot. "It is a question of my fortune."

And she explained the situation in which she

found herself, and demanded a prophecy for her sordid hopes.

"You do not know what it is,—the Grand Deal?" said Madame Fontaine solemnly.

"No, I have never been rich enough to see that game!—A hundred francs! Excuse me,—where could I have got them? But to-day, now, I must have it!"

"I do not do it often, my little one," replied Madame Fontaine, "I only give it to rich people on great occasions, and they pay me twenty-five louis; for, do you see, that fatigues me, it wears me out! The *Spirit* shakes me up, down there in my stomach. It is like, as they used to say, going to the Sabbat!"

"But when I tell you, my good Madame Fontaine, that it is a question of all my future—"

"Well, for you, to whom I owe so many consultations, I will give myself up to the Spirit!" replied Madame Fontaine, revealing in her withered countenance an expression of terror that was not simulated.

She left her old dirty sofa in the corner of the chimney and went towards her table, covered with a green cloth so worn that all the threads could be counted in it, and where, on the left, a toad of enormous dimensions lay asleep beside an open cage which was inhabited by a black hen with ruffled feathers.

"Astaroth! Here, my son!" said she, giving a light tap with a long knitting-needle on the back of the toad, which looked up to her with an intelligent

air, "and you, Mademoiselle Cleopatra! attention!" she added, giving another little tap on the beak of the old hen.

Madame Fontaine then sank into inward meditation, she remained during several moments perfectly motionless; she looked like a dead woman, her eyes turned inwards so that only the whites were seen; then she stiffened herself and said in a cavernous voice:

"I am here!"

Then, after having automatically strewn some grain for Cleopatra, she took up her pack of cards, *le grand jeu,* shuffled them convulsively, and made Madame Cibot cut them, all the while sighing deeply. When this image of death in a dirty turban, wrapped in a sinister jacket, examined the grains of millet which the black hen pecked at and ordered her toad Astaroth to creep over the cards which were spread on the table, Madame Cibot felt the cold run down her back, she shivered. It is only the great beliefs which give great emotions. To have or not to have the money—that was the question, as Shakespeare says.

At the end of seven or eight minutes, during which the sorceress opened and read in a sepulchral voice, from a conjuring book, and examined the grains of millet which remained, and the track which the toad had made as it crept away, she expounded the meaning of the cards in turning upon them her white eyes.

"You will succeed! though nothing in this affair

will happen as you think," she said. "You will have many steps to take. But you will gather the fruits of your labors. You will do very great wrong, but it will be with you as with all those who are near sick people and who covet a part of their inheritance. You will be helped in this evil work by people of consequence—Later, you will repent in the agonies of death, for you will die in the village to which you will retire with your second husband, assassinated by two escaped convicts, one a small man with red hair, and one an old man quite bald, on account of the fortune which you will be supposed to have—Go, my daughter, you are free to act or to remain as you are."

The inward exaltation which had lit the torches in the hollow eyes of this skeleton, so cold in appearance, instantly went out. When the horoscope was pronounced, Madame Fontaine experienced something like a bewilderment, and resembled in every respect a somnambulist suddenly awakened; she looked around her with an astonished air; then she recognized Madame Cibot, and appeared surprised to see the horror depicted on her face.

"Well, my daughter," said she, in a voice quite different from that in which she had prophesied—"are you satisfied?—"

Madame Cibot looked at the sorceress with a stupefied air, without being able to answer her.

"Ah, you would have the Grand Deal! I have treated you like an old acquaintance. Only give me the hundred francs—"

THE CIBOT AND MADAME FONTAINE

"You will succeed! though nothing in this affair will happen as you think," she said. "You will have many steps to take. But you will gather the fruits of your labors. You will do very great wrong, but it will be with you as with all those who are near sick people and who covet a part of their inheritance. You will be helped in this evil work by people of consequence—Later—"

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"Cibot, to die?" cried the concierge.

"I, then, have said to you very terrible things?—" demanded Madame Fontaine, quite simply.

"Why, yes!" said the Cibot, drawing from her pocket one hundred francs, and putting them on the edge of the table. "To die assassinated!—"

"Ah! see there, you would have the Grand Deal. —But console yourself, all the people assassinated in the cards do not die."

"But, is that possible, Mame Fontaine?"

"Ah, my pretty little one, I, I don't know anything about it. You would rap at the door of the future, and I have pulled the cord, that is all—and *he* came!"

"What *he?*" said Madame Cibot.

"Well, the Spirit, whatever it is," replied the sorceress, impatiently.

"Good-bye, Madame Fontaine," replied the other. "I didn't know the Grand Deal, you've frightened me terribly. See, there!"

"Madame does not put herself twice a month into that state!" said the servant-woman, reconducting Madame Cibot to the landing. "She is all broken up by the pain of it, it uses her up so. Now she will eat some mutton chops and sleep for three hours—"

Once in the street, as she walked along, Madame Cibot did as inquirers after advice of all kinds do. She believed in that which the prophecy offered that would favor her interests, and she doubted the misfortunes promised. The next day, confirmed in her resolutions, she put everything at work to find

some way to enrich herself by acquiring a part of the Pons museum. Thus for some time she entertained no other thought than that of how to combine the means of success. The phenomenon which we have just explained, that of the concentration of moral forces in the common people who, never having used their intellectual faculties like the educated classes, in daily activity, find these faculties strong and powerful at the moment when their minds become possessed of that formidable weapon called a fixed idea,— now appeared in Madame Cibot in a superior degree. Just as a fixed idea can produce miracles of adroitness and miracles of sentiment, this woman, urged by cupidity, became as powerful as a Nucingen at bay, as quick-witted beneath her stupidity as the seductive La Palférine.

A few days later, seeing Rémonencq opening his shop at about seven o'clock in the morning, she went to him with the slyness of a cat.

"What is to be done to find out the truth about the value of those things piled up there in the apartment of my gentlemen?" asked she of him.

"Oh, that's easy enough," replied the curiosity dealer in his frightful Auvergnat dialect, which it is useless to continue to reproduce for the clearness of the narrative. "If you will deal fair with me, I will tell you of an appraiser, a very honest man, who will know the value of those pictures to a penny."

"Who?"

"Monsieur Magus, a Jew, who only does business now for his own pleasure."

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Élie Magus, whose name is too well-known to readers of *The Human Comedy* to require a description of him here, had retired from the business of selling pictures and curiosities, in which, as a merchant, he had followed the conduct which Pons had pursued as an amateur. The celebrated appraisers, the late Henry, MM. Pigeot and Moret, Théret, Georges and Roëhn, in fact all the experts of the Musée, were children as compared with Élie Magus, who could discover a chef-d'œuvre under the dirt of a century, who knew all the schools and the signatures of all the painters.

This Jew, who came originally from Bordeaux to Paris, had given up business in 1835, without, however, giving up the miserable appearance which he retained, according to the habits of the majority of Jews, so faithful is this race to its traditions. During the Middle Ages, persecution obliged the Jews to go in rags so as to disarm suspicion, to always complain and whine, and cry, in their poverty. The compulsions of former times have developed, as always happens, a race-instinct of the people, an endemic vice. Élie Magus, by dint of buying diamonds and reselling them, of bargaining for pictures and laces, valuable curiosities and enamels, fine sculptures and old goldsmith's work, possessed an immense fortune of unknown amount

acquired in this business, now become so considerable. In fact, the number of such dealers has increased tenfold within the last twenty years in Paris, the city in which all the curiosities of the world give each other rendezvous. As for pictures, there are but three cities in which they are sold—Rome, London, and Paris.

Élie Magus lived in the Chaussée des Minimes, a short, wide street which leads to the Place Royale, in which he owned an old mansion bought for a piece of bread, as they say, in 1831. This magnificent structure contained one of the most sumptuous apartments, decorated in the time of Louis XV., for it was the old Hôtel Maulaincourt. Built by the celebrated president of the Cour des Aides, it escaped, thanks to its situation, from being plundered during the Revolution. If the old Jew, contrary to Israelitish traditions, had decided to become a proprietor, we may well be sure he had his reasons. The old man was ending, as we all end, by a mania developed into a craze. Though he was as miserly as his friend, the late Gobseck, he allowed himself to be influenced by his admiration for the masterpieces he dealt in; but his taste, becoming more and more refined and difficult to satisfy, had ended by becoming one of those passions which are only permissible to kings when they are rich and when they love the arts. Like the second king of Prussia, whose enthusiasm for grenadiers was only awakened when the subject had of height at least six feet, and who expended

inordinate sums in increasing his living museum of grenadiers, the retired dealer grew enthusiastic over none but irreproachable canvases left as the master had painted them, and of the highest order of execution. Thus, Élie Magus was never absent from one of the great sales, he visited all of the picture marts, and traveled all over Europe. This soul, devoted to lucre, cold as a glacier, warmed up at the sight of a chef-d'œuvre, precisely as a libertine, weary of women, is moved at the sight of a perfect young girl, and devotes himself to the search of beauty without defect. This Don Juan of pictures, this worshipper of the ideal, found then, in this admiration, enjoyment superior to that which the miser receives from contemplation of his gold. He lived in a seraglio of beautiful pictures.

These masterpieces, lodged as the children of princes should be, occupied the whole of the first floor of the mansion which Élie Magus had restored, and with what splendor! Before the windows hung curtains of the most beautiful gold brocade of Venice. On the floors were extended the most magnificent carpets of the Savonnerie. The pictures, to the number of about one hundred, were set off by the most splendid frames, regilded, all of them, with taste, by the only gilder of Paris whom Élie found conscientious, by Servais, to whom the old Jew taught the art of gilding with English gold, a leaf infinitely superior to that of the French gold-beaters. Servais is in the art of gilding what Thouvenin is in that of binding, an artist in love

with his own work. The windows of this apartment were protected by iron shutters. Élie Magus inhabited two rooms under the mansard of the second floor, poorly furnished, full of his ragged clothes, and smelling of Jewry, for he was ending his life as he had always lived.

The first floor, entirely given up to pictures, for which the Jew still continued to barter, and to cases arriving from foreign countries, contained an immense atelier, where worked always exclusively for him, Moret, the most skillful of our picture restorers, and one of those whom the Musée should employ. There, too, was the apartment of his daughter, the fruit of his old age, a Jewess as beautiful as are all the Jewesses when the Asiatic type reappears pure and noble in them. Noémi, guarded by two fanatical female Jewish servants, had for outpost-guard, a Polish Jew named Abramko, compromised by an extraordinary chance, in the Polish insurrection, and whom Élie Magus had rescued for purposes of self-interest. Abramko, the concierge of this silent, gloomy, and desolate house, occupied a lodge protected by three dogs of remarkable ferocity, one a Newfoundland, the second from the Pyrenees, the third an English bull-dog.

These were the precautions on which was established the security of the Jew, who traveled from home without fear, who "slept on both ears," dreading no attempt against his daughter, his first treasure, nor against his pictures, nor against his gold. Abramko received every year two hundred

francs more than the preceding year and was to receive nothing more at the death of Magus, who was meantime training him to become the money-lender of the quarter. Abramko never admitted any one into the house without having first examined him through the formidable iron grating of the door. This concierge, of Herculean strength, adored Magus, as Sancho Panza adored Don Quixote. The dogs, shut up during the day, were not fed; but at night Abramko let them out, and they were compelled, by an astute arrangement of the old Jew, to keep each one his appointed station—one in the garden at the foot of a pole from the top of which hung a piece of meat, the other in the court-yard, at the foot of a similar pole, and a third in the great hall on the ground floor. You will understand that these dogs, who in the first place guarded the house by instinct, were additionally guarded themselves by hunger, and that they would not have quit, for the loveliest female of their race, their place at the foot of their poles of Cockaigne; they would not have left to investigate anything whatever. If a stranger appeared, the dogs, all three of them, imagined that the unknown was after their meat, which was not let down to them till the morning when Abramko awoke. This infernal combination had an immense advantage. The dogs never barked. The genius of Magus had advanced them to the grade of savages, and they had become as silent as a Mohican. Now we may see what happened. On a certain occasion, certain malefactors emboldened by this

silence, thought it would be an easy thing to "crack" the strong-box of this Jew. One of them, selected to lead the assault, climbed over the wall of the garden and started to descend on the other side; the bull-dog let him alone, although he had heard him perfectly; but as soon as the foot of this gentleman came within reach of his jaw, he bit it off neatly and ate it up. The thief had the courage to recross the wall, stepping on the bone of his leg until he fell fainting in the arms of his comrades, who carried him off. This Parisian event, for the "Gazette des Tribunaux" did not fail to report this delightful episode of the Parisian nights, was taken for a hoax.

Magus, at this time seventy-five years of age, was quite likely to live to be one hundred. Rich as he was, he lived like the Rémonencqs. Three thousand francs, including all his luxury for his daughter, comprised all his expenses. No existence was ever more methodical than that of this old man. He arose at daybreak, he ate a piece of bread rubbed with garlic, a breakfast which lasted him until the dinner hour. The dinner of a monastic frugality, was a family repast. Between the hour when he rose and midday, the fanatic employed his time in wandering around the apartment which was adorned by his masterpieces. He dusted everything himself, furniture, pictures; he admired everything in turn without any sense of weariness; then he descended into his daughter's apartment and intoxicated himself with the happiness of fathers, after

which he departed on his expeditions around Paris, where he watched over all the auction sales, went to all the exhibitions, etc. When some masterpiece appeared under the conditions which he deemed essential, the life of this man became animated; he had a stroke to make, an affair to bring to a conclusion, a battle of Marengo to gain. He piled one craftiness on another, in order to obtain his new Sultana at the lowest price. He possessed a map of Europe, a map on which the locality of all the chefs-d'œuvre were marked, and he commissioned his co-religionists in every place to watch over them in his interests for a certain price. But what recompenses for such pains!—

The two lost pictures of Raphaël, so persistently sought for by the Raphaëlists, Magus owned them! He owned also the original of the *Maîtresse du Giorgione*, the woman for whom the painter died, and the so-called originals are only copies of this glorious canvas, which is worth five hundred thousand francs in the estimate of Magus. This Jew treasured the masterpieces of Titian, "The Entombment," a picture painted for Charles V., which was sent by the great master to the great Emperor, accompanied by a letter written wholly in Titian's hand, which letter is glued to the bottom of the canvas. He has of the same painter the original sketch from which all the portraits of Philip II. were made. The ninety-seven other pictures were all of this importance and all equally distinguished. Thus Magus scorned our Musée,

ravished by the sunlight which destroys the noblest pictures, in passing through the panes of glass, whose action is like that of lenses. No picture gallery is safe unless lighted from the ceiling. Magus closed and opened the shutters of his museum himself, displaying as much care and as many precautions for his pictures as he did for his daughter, his other idol. Ah! the old picture-maniac knew well the laws of painting! According to him, the masterpieces had a life of their own, their times and seasons; their beauty depended upon the light which came to color them; he spoke of them as the Dutchmen formerly spoke of their tulips, and he went to see such and such a picture at the very hour when the masterpiece was resplendent in all its glory, when the weather was fine and clear.

He was himself a living picture in the middle of these motionless paintings, this little old man clothed in a shabby frock-coat, a decennial silk waistcoat, a pair of dirty trousers, his bald head, his hollow cheeks, his stubby and straggling white beard, his menacing and pointed chin, and mouth empty of teeth, his eyes, brilliant as those of his dogs, his bony, fleshless hands, his nose, like an obelisk, his skin wrinkled and cold, smiling at these beautiful creations of genius! A Jew, surrounded by his three millions, will always be one of the finest sights humanity can offer. Robert Medal, our great actor, sublime as he is, cannot attain to this poesy. Paris is the city of the world which conceals the greatest number of originals of this species

having a religion at their hearts. The "eccentrics" of London end always by becoming disgusted with the objects of their worship, just as they become disgusted with life itself; whereas in Paris these monomaniacs live forever with their fancies in a happy concubinage of spirits. You will often see coming towards you here such beings as Pons or Élie Magus, very poorly clothed, the nose like that of the perpetual secretary of the French Academy, forever in the air, seeming to care for nothing, to feel nothing, paying no attention to women, to the shops, wandering seemingly haphazard, their pockets empty, their heads apparently still emptier, and you ask yourself to what Parisian tribe they can belong. Very well, these men are millionaires, collectors, the most passionate individuals upon the earth, individuals who are capable of venturing even into the muddy ways watched by the correctional police in order to get possession of a cup, of a picture, of a rare treasure, as in fact Élie Magus did one day in Germany.

*

Such was the expert to whom Rémonencq conducted mysteriously Madame Cibot. Rémonencq consulted Élie Magus whenever he chanced to meet him on the boulevards. The Jew had at various times loaned, through Abramko, certain sums of money to this ancient messenger whose honesty was known to him. The Chaussée des Minimes being a few steps from the Rue de Normandie, the two accomplices in this projected stroke arrived there in ten minutes.

"You are going to see," said Rémonencq, "the richest of all the old curiosity-dealers, the greatest connoisseur there is in Paris."

Madame Cibot was stupefied when she found herself in the presence of a little old man, wrapped in a riding-coat unworthy of being mended even by Cibot, who was overlooking the work of his restorer, a painter employed in repairing pictures in a cold room on this vast ground floor; then, catching a glance from his eyes, as full of cold malevolence as those of a cat, she trembled.

"What do you want, Rémonencq?" he said.

"It's about estimating some pictures; and there is only you in Paris who could say to a poor coppersmith like me what he ought to give for them when he has not, like you, the thousands and hundreds!"

"Where are they?" said Élie Magus.

"Here is the concierge of the house where their owner lives and with whom I have arranged—"

"What is the owner's name?"

"Monsieur Pons," said Madame Cibot.

"I don't know him," replied Magus, with an indifferent air, gently pressing at the same time, his own foot against that of his restorer.

Moret, this painter, knew the value of Pons's collection and he had suddenly looked up. This warning could not have been hazarded but under the eyes of such a pair as Rémonencq and Madame Cibot. The Jew had taken the moral measure of this woman by a glance in which his eye served him as the scales of a money-changer. The pair were undoubtedly ignorant that the good man Pons and Magus had often measured swords. In fact, these two fierce amateurs were filled with envy of each other. Hence the old Jew had just experienced an internal shock. Never had he hoped to be able to penetrate into the seraglio so well guarded. The Pons collection was the only one in Paris which could rival the Magus collection. The Jew had had, twenty years later than Pons, the same idea; but in his quality of amateur dealer, the Pons collection had been as tightly closed to him as to Dusommerard. Pons and Magus were both at heart, jealous of all approach. Neither of them liked that celebrity which is ordinarily sought by the owners of choice cabinets. To be able to examine the magnificent collection of the poor musician was for Élie Magus the same happiness

as would be that of an amateur of women to be able to slip into the boudoir of a beautiful mistress whom his friend conceals from him. The great respect which Rémonencq showed to this strange personage and the influence which all real power, even the most mysterious, exercises, made Madame Cibot obedient and complying. She lost the autocratic tone with which she was in the habit of conversing with the tenants and her two gentlemen, she accepted the conditions of Magus, and promised to introduce him into the Pons collection that very day. It was admitting the enemy into the heart of the fortress, it was plunging a poignard into the heart of Pons, who for the last ten years had strictly forbidden her to admit any one, no matter who, who carried always with him his keys, and whom she had hitherto obeyed, although she had privately shared the opinions of Schmucke on the subject of bric-à-brac. The fact was that the good Schmucke in discoursing about these magnificent "kneeck-knocks" and deploring the folly of Pons, had inculcated his contempt for all these antiquities into Madame Cibot's breast and thus for a long time had protected the Musée-Pons from all invasion.

Since Pons had been confined to his bed, Schmucke did his friend's work at the theatre and in the schools. The poor German, who saw the sick man only in the morning and at dinner, endeavored to make up for everything by keeping together their common clientèle; but all his strength was absorbed by this task, so much did his grief overwhelm him.

In seeing this poor man so sad, the pupils and the people at the theatre—all of them informed of the illness of Pons—asked for news of him, and the grief of the pianist was so great that he obtained even from the indifferent, the same grimace of conventional sensibility which is bestowed in Paris on the greatest catastrophes. The very principle of the life of the good German was attacked in him as well as in Pons. Schmucke suffered at once from his own grief and in his friend's sickness. Thus he would speak of Pons during the half of the lesson he was giving; he interrupted so artlessly a demonstration, to ask of himself how his friend was feeling, that the young school-girl listened with interest to his account of Pons's sickness. Between two lessons he would rush to the Rue de Normandie to see Pons for a quarter of an hour. Frightened at the emptiness of their common purse, and alarmed by Madame Cibot, who for the last fortnight had been increasing to her utmost, the expenses of the sickness, the piano-professor felt his inward anguish dominated by a courage of which he would never have believed himself capable. For the first time in his life he was anxious to earn money so that funds might not be lacking in the household. When some school-girl, really touched by the situation of the two friends, would ask of Schmucke how he could leave Pons all alone, he replied with the sublime smile of the dupes:

"Montenmoiselle, ve haf Montame Zipod! a drayzure! a bearl! Bons ees daken gare of lige a brince."

So, while Schmucke was trotting the streets, the Cibot was mistress of the apartment and of the sick man. How could Pons, who had eaten nothing for fifteen days and who lay helpless, so that she was obliged to lift him herself and place him on a sofa while she made his bed, how could he watch his soi-disant guardian angel? Naturally, she had made her visit to Élie Magus while Schmucke was eating his breakfast.

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She returned just at the moment when the German was bidding the sick man good-bye; for, ever since the revelation of the possible fortune of Pons, she had no longer left her celibate, she brooded over him like a hen! She settled herself on a comfortable sofa at the foot of the bed and diverted Pons by retailing to him all that sort of gossip in which such women excel. Grown wheedling, gentle, attentive, anxious, she wound herself into the confidence of the good Pons with a Machiavellian cleverness, as we shall presently see. Frightened by the prediction of the Grand Deal of Madame Fontaine, she had promised herself that she would succeed in her plans by none but gentle means, by a wickedness purely moral, to get herself mentioned in the testament of her gentleman. Her ten years' ignorance of the value of the Pons museum she considered as ten years of disinterested attachment and probity, and she now proposed to draw upon that magnificent capital. Since the day when Rémonencq with a golden word had hatched in the heart of this woman a serpent hidden in its shell for twenty-five years,—the desire of being rich,—she had nourished this serpent on all the poisonous leaven which strews the bottom of human hearts, and we shall now see how she executed the advice which this serpent hissed in her ear.

"Well, has he taken his drink, my cherubin? Is he better?" she said to Schmucke.

"No petter, my tear Montame Zipod, no petter," answered the German, wiping away a tear.

"Bah! you are too easily frightened, my dear monsieur. You must take things easier—if Cibot lay at the point of death I couldn't be more desolate than you are. Come! our cherubin has a good constitution. And then, don't you see, he seems to have been virtuous! you never know how long the virtuous folks can live! He is very sick, that's true, but with all the care I give him I will pull him through. You be easy and go to your work. I will keep him company and see that he drinks his pints of barley water."

"Put vor you, I moost tie of anchziety," said Schmucke, pressing the hand of his good housekeeper in his own with a look full of confidence.

The Cibot entered the sick man's bedroom, wiping her eyes.

"What is the matter, Madame Cibot?" said Pons.

"It is Monsieur Schmucke that has upset me. He's crying over you as if you were dead!" she said. "Well, though you are not well, you are not yet sick enough to be cried over; but that has affected me so. Mon Dieu! am I not a fool to love people so much, and to care more for you than I do for Cibot! For, after all, you are nothing to me, we are related only through the first woman; and yet, here I am all upside down as soon as anything's the matter with you, on my word of honor. I'd cut off

my hand,—the left one of course,—here before you, just to see you coming and going, eating and filibustering with them dealers like you used to.—If I had ever had a child I think that I should have loved it as I love you, just! Drink this, my darling, drink it all down. Will you drink, monsieur! Didn't M. Poulain say 'if he does not want to go to Père-Lachaise, M. Pons must drink every day as many pailfuls of water as an Auvergnat sells.' Come, then, you must drink!—"

"But I do drink, my good Cibot—so much and so much that my stomach is drowned—"

"There, that's right," said the woman, putting down the empty glass. "You will save your life that way. Dr. Poulain had a patient like you who never had no nursing, whom his children abandoned, and he died of this very disease—just because he wouldn't drink! So you must drink, you see, my lamb!—they buried him only two months ago.—Don't you know that if you die, my dear monsieur, you will carry off with you that good Schmucke?—He is like a baby, word of honor. Ah, how he loves you, that dear lamb of a man! no, never woman loved man like that!—He can't eat nor drink, he has grown thin in the last two weeks, as much as you, who are only skin and bones—That makes me jealous, for I am so much attached to you; but I haven't come to that yet, I haven't yet lost my appetite,—on the contrary! What with running up and down stairs all day, I get so tired in my legs that in the evening I just tumble down like a

lump of lead. Everybody can see how I neglect my poor Cibot for you, so that Mademoiselle Rémonencq has to get him his victuals, and he grumbles at me because everything is bad! As for that, I tell him we should all learn how to suffer for others and that you are much too sick to be left to yourself—And then you are not well enough for not to have a nurse! I would like to see myself letting you pay a nurse here, I who have taken care of you and your affairs for the last ten years—And they think of nothing but their mouth! they eat for ten, they are always wanting their wine, their sugar, their warming pans, their easy times—And then how they rob the sick people, when the sick people will not put them in their wills—Get a nurse in here for to-day, but to-morrow you would find a picture, some curiosity or other gone—"

"Oh, Madame Cibot," cried Pons, beside himself at the idea. "Don't leave me.—Don't let anybody touch anything here!—"

"I am here," answered the Cibot, "as long as I have the strength I will be here!—be easy! Monsieur Poulain, who maybe had an eye on your treasures, didn't he want me to get you a nurse!—how I snuffed him out for you! 'There ain't no one but me,' I said to him, 'that monsieur wants, he knows my ways, and I know his.' And he held his tongue. But a nurse,—they are all thieves! I hate them kind of women!—You will see how scheming they are. Once there was an old gentleman—notice that it was Dr. Poulain who told me this—

now, a Madame Sabatier, a woman thirty-six years old, who used to sell slippers at the Palais—you know the row of shops they have demolished down at the Palais—?"

Pons made an affirmative sign.

"Good. Well, that woman did not get on because of her man, who drank all the time and who died at last, so they say, of spontaneous *imbustion;* but she was a handsome woman, it must be said, only that did not profit her, although she had, it was said, lawyers for her good friends—So, when it came to the break-up, she went out nursing women in childbed, and lived when at home, in the Rue Barre-du-Bec. She went out to nurse like that, and an old gentleman, who had, saving your presence, a disease of the *lurinairy* organs, and they sounded him like an artesian well, and he had to be taken such care of that she had to sleep on a cot-bed in his chamber. Is it believable, such things as that! But you will tell me, 'men don't respect nothing, they are all so selfish!' Well now, you see, in talking with him, you will understand she was always there, she cheered him up, she told him stories, she got him to talk, just as we are here, that is so, both of them chatting—She learned that his nephews,—the sick man had nephews,—were monsters, that they worried him, and, to cut a long story short, that his sickness came from his nephews. Very well, my dear monsieur, she saved that gentleman, she became his wife, and they have a child which is superb, and to whom Mame

Bordevin, who keeps the butcher-shop, corner of the Rue Charlot, and who was a relative to that woman, was godmother—And wasn't that a piece of luck!—I, I am married; but I ain't got no children, and I can say this, that it's Cibot's fault, who loves me too much, for if I wanted to—well, that's enough. But what should we ever have done with a family, I and my Cibot, when we haven't got a sou to our name, after thirty years of honesty, my dear monsieur! But what comforts me is that I have never taken a liard of anybody else's. Never have I done wrong to any one—Now, just suppose that one could say,—since in six weeks you will be on your pins again, sauntering along the boulevard;—very well, that you put me in your will, well, now, I shouldn't have any peace till I'd found your heirs to give it back to them—so much I am afraid of anything that I haven't earned by the sweat of my brow. You will say to me, 'But, Mame Cibot, do not torment yourself like that; you have fairly earned it, you have taken care of those gentlemen as though they were your own babies, you must have saved them a thousand francs a year—' For in my place, don't you see, monsieur, there would have been many cooks that has got a thousand francs laid by. 'It's only fair then, if that worthy gentleman has left you a little annuity!—' they would say to me, we may suppose. Very well. No, I, I am disinterested,—I don't know how women can do good for their own interests—That is no longer doing good at all, is it, monsieur?—I do not

go to the church, I! I haven't no time; but my conscience tells me what is right—There now, do not agitate yourself like that, my lamb!—do not scratch yourself!—Mon Dieu! how yellow you are! you are so yellow that you are getting brown—How queer it is that one can become in twenty days like a lemon!—Well, honesty is the treasure of poor people, they need to possess something! Well, let's suppose you came to the worst, I would be the first to say to you that you should give everything that belongs to you to Monsieur Schmucke. It is your duty to do so, for he is himself all the family you've got! He loves you, that man, like a dog loves his master."

"Ah, yes!" said Pons, "I've never been loved in my life but by him—"

"Oh, monsieur!" said Madame Cibot, "you are not kind; and I, then, don't I love you?—"

"I do not say that, my dear Madame Cibot—"

"Good! There, you go and take me for a servant, a common cook, as if I had no heart! Ah, Mon Dieu! split yourself, then, for eleven years, taking care of two old bachelors! think of nothing but their comfort,—did I not rummage over ten fruit shops and let people make jokes on me just to get you the best Brie cheese, didn't I go all the way to the Halle, so that you might have fresh butter; and take care of everything so that in ten years I have broken nothing for you, or even chipped a single thing? Be, then, like a mother to her children! And you will for all this hear yourself called 'My dear Madame

Cibot,' which proves plainly that there is not a bit of feeling for you in the heart of the old gentleman whom you have taken care of like a son of a king, for the little King of Rome was never cared for as you've been!—Will you bet that he was taken care of as you?—Why, the proof is that he died in the flower of his age.—Look here, monsieur, you are not just—You are an ungrateful! It is because I am only a poor concierge. Ah, Mon Dieu! you then think, too, that we are no better than dogs?—"

"But, my dear Madame Cibot—"

"Come, now. You who know such a lot, explain to me why we are always treated like that, we concierges, why no one believes that we have any feeling; why do people make fun of us, in these times when they are talking about equality!—I, I am not worth, then, as much as any other woman! I, who was one of the handsomest women in Paris, so that they called me 'the beautiful oyster-girl,' and I used to receive seven or eight declarations of love every day!—And if I wished to have them still! See, monsieur, you know well that scrap of an iron-dealer, who is down at the door? Very well! If I was a widow, just suppose, he would marry me with his eyes shut, so much he has them opened for me that he says to me every day: 'Oh, what fine arms you've got, Mame Cibot!—I dreamed last night that they were bread and that I was the butter being spread on them!—' Look, monsieur, there's a pair of arms for you!—"

She turned up her sleeve and showed the most

magnificent arm in the world, as white and as fresh as her hand was red and wrinkled; an arm plump, round, and dimpled, and which, coming forth from its swathing of coarse merino, as a blade is drawn from its scabbard, dazzled the eyes of poor Pons, who dared not look at it too long.

"And," she resumed, "which has opened as many hearts as my knife has opened oysters! Very well, it belongs to Cibot, and I have been doing very wrong to neglect that poor dear man who would throw himself over a precipice at the first word I would say to him, for you, monsieur, who call me 'my dear Madame Cibot,' when I have done impossible things for you—"

"Do listen to me," said the sick man, "I can't call you my mother nor my wife—"

"No, never in my life, never in all my days, will I attach myself again!—"

"But, let me speak!" said Pons, "see, I have just spoken of Schmucke."

"Monsieur Schmucke! Ah, there's a heart!" said she. "Now he loves me, he does, because he is poor! It is riches which makes men unfeeling, and you are rich! Very well, have a nurse, you will see what a life she will lead you! and how she will torment you like a flea—The doctor will say that you must drink, and she will only give you something to eat! She will get you buried so she can rob you! You don't deserve to have a Madame Cibot!—Go on! When Monsieur Poulain comes you will tell him to send you a nurs !"

"But sacrebleu! just listen to me," cried the sick man in anger. "I was not speaking of women, when I mentioned my friend Schmucke!—I know well enough that there are no other hearts that truly love me but yours and Schmucke's!—"

"Do not irritate yourself like that!" cried the Cibot, throwing herself upon Pons and laying him back in his bed by main strength.

"How can it be that I do not love you?—" said poor Pons.

"You love me, then, really and truly?—There, there, forgive me, monsieur," she said, weeping and wiping her eyes. "Very well, yes, you love me, just as one loves a servant, that's all!—a servant to whom you throw an annuity of six hundred francs, like a piece of bread thrown to a dog in his kennel!—"

"Oh, Madame Cibot," cried Pons, "what do you take me for! You don't know me!"

"Ah, you do love me better than that!" she exclaimed, meeting Pons's eyes; "you do love your good, fat Cibot, like a mother? Very well, that's right, I am your mother, you are both my children! —Ah, if I did but know those who have caused you unhappiness, I would risk getting myself before the Assize Court and even in the jail, for I would tear their eyes out!—those people deserve to be put to death at the Barrière Saint-Jacques! and even that is too good for such villains!—You so good, so tender, for you have a heart of gold, you were created and put into the world to make some woman happy

—yes, you would have rendered her happy—that may be seen, you were cut out for it—from the very first when I saw how you lived with Monsieur Schmucke I said to myself, 'No, Monsieur Pons has wasted his life. He was made for a good husband—' Come! you are a man to love a woman!"

"Ah, yes!" said Pons, "and yet I never had one!—"

"Really?" said the Cibot with an insinuating air, drawing nearer to him, and taking his hand, "you don't know what it is to have a mistress who would do anything for her friend? Is it possible! I, in your place, I would not go from here into the other world without having known the greatest happiness that there is on earth!—Poor lamb! If I was what I have been, on my honor, I'd leave Cibot for you! And, with a nose cut like that, for you have a fine, proud nose! How have you managed, my poor cherub?—You will tell me, 'all the women do not know about men,' and it is a misfortune that they do marry so at haphazard, it's pitiful to see them. I, I thought you had mistresses by the dozen, dancers, actresses, duchesses—seeing how much you were away!—When I saw you going out, I used to say always to Cibot, 'See, there is Monsieur Pons, who is going gallivanting!' Honor bright! I said that, I was so sure that you were a favorite with the women! Why, heaven created you for love—why, my dear little monsieur, I saw that the day on which you dined here for the first time. Oh, weren't you touched with the pleasure

you gave to Monsieur Schmucke! And he, wasn't he crying about it still the next day, and saying to me, 'Montame Zipod, he tid tine here,' that I cried for it myself, just like a fool, also. And how miserable he was when you recommenced your wanderings and went out to dine in society! Poor man! Never was such desolation seen! Ah, you have good reason to make him your heir! Yes, indeed, he is a whole family for you in himself, this worthy, this dear old man!—Do not forget him! because, if you do, God will never receive you into his paradise, where he never ought to let any one enter who hasn't been grateful toward his friends and left them an income."

Pons made vain efforts to reply, the Cibot talked as the wind blows. If means have been invented to arrest the motion of steam-engines, that of stopping the tongue of a concierge would be too much for the genius of all the inventors.

"I know what you are going to say!" she resumed. "Now, it don't kill nobody, my dear monsieur, to make his testament when he is sick; and if I was in your place I would, for fear of accidents, I would not want to abandon that poor sheep, no, for he is the blessed fool of the good Lord; he knows nothing of anything; I would not want to leave him to the mercy of those rascals, the business men, nor to relations neither, who are the scum of the earth! See now, has there been any one of them who has been here to see you for twenty days?—And you are going to give to them your property! Do you

know, they say that everything that is here is worth something!"

"Well, yes," said Pons.

"Rémonencq, who knows you are an amateur, and who deals in such things, says that he would give you thirty thousand francs of annuity if you would let him have your pictures after your death—now there's a chance! In your place I'd take it! But I thought at first that he was making fun of me when he said that to me—you ought to tell Monsieur Schmucke of the value of all these things here, for he is a man that they would cheat like a baby; he has not the least idea what the beautiful things you have here are worth! He has so little idea of it that he would give them away for a song, unless, for love of you, he would keep them all his life, if he should live after you, that is, for your death will kill him! But I shall be here, I, I'll protect him against and from everything,—I and Cibot."

"Dear Madame Cibot," replied Pons, touched by this frightful garrulity, through which seemed to run the simple good feeling characteristic of the lower classes, "what would become of me without you and Schmucke?"

"Ah, we are the only friends you've got in this world! that is true enough! But two kind hearts are worth all the families put together—don't talk to me of families! They are like the tongue, as the old actor said—all that there is of the best and of the worst.—Where, then, are your relatives? Have you any relatives?—I have never seen them—"

"It is they who have laid me on a sick bed!" cried Pons, with a profound bitterness.

"Ah, then you have got relations!—" said the Cibot, starting up as if her seat had been of iron suddenly made red hot. "Ah, they must be a nice set, your relations! See there! here are twenty days, yes, this morning it is twenty days, that you have been at death's door, and they ain't none of them come to ask you how you are! That is a little stronger than coffee, that is!—But in your place, I would sooner leave all my money to the foundling hospital than to give them one liard!"

"Well, my dear Madame Cibot, I am going to leave all that I possess to my young cousin, the daughter of my first cousin, the Président Camusot, you know, the magistrate who came here one morning about two months ago."

"Ah, a little fat man who sent his servants to beg your pardon—for the stupidity of his wife—how the waiting-maid asked me questions about you, an affected old thing, whom I had a great mind to dust her velvet cloak for her with the handle of my broom! Did any one ever see a waiting-maid before wear a velvet cloak? No, on my word of honor, the world's turned upside down! what's the use of making revolutions? Dine twice a day, if you can, you rich guzzlers! But I say that the laws are all useless, that there is nothing any more sacred, if Louis-Philippe don't keep up a proper distinction of classes; for, in fact, if we are all equal, is it not so, monsieur, a waiting-maid ought

not to have a velvet cloak when I, Madame Cibot, with thirty years of honesty to boast of, I haven't any—There's a pretty state of things! People ought to be seen for what they are. A lady's maid is a lady's maid, just as I, I am a concierge! Why do they wear their epaulettes with a fringe of gold tassels in the army? Everybody in their own rank, I say! See, now! Do you want me to tell you what will be the fine end of all this? Very well. France will be ruined!—And under the Emperor, is it not so, monsieur, things went different? Thus I said to Cibot: 'Look here, do you see, my man, a house in which there are lady's maids in velvet cloaks, there are people without no bowels of compassion—' "

"Without bowels of compassion, that is it," replied Pons.

And Pons related all his griefs and his mortifications to Madame Cibot, who poured forth invectives against the relations and testified the most extreme tenderness at each phase of this melancholy recital. Finally, she wept!

*

To understand this sudden intimacy between the old musician and Madame Cibot, it is enough to consider the situation of a celibate grievously ill, for the first time in his life, stretched upon a bed of suffering, alone in the world, having to pass each day face to face with his own thoughts, and finding this day all the longer that he was delivered up to the indefinable sufferings with which liver diseases blacken even the brightest lives, and that, deprived of his numerous occupations, he had fallen into the Parisian marasmus, he longed for all that he had been accustomed to see gratuitously in the streets of Paris. This profound and gloomy solitude, this suffering, whose effects are felt even more in the moral than in the physical being, the inanition of life—all this drives a celibate, and, above all, one who is already feeble in character and whose heart is tender and credulous, to attach himself to whoever takes care of him, just as a drowning man clings to a plank. Thus Pons listened with eagerness to all Madame Cibot's gossip. Schmucke, Madame Cibot, and the Doctor Poulain were to him the whole of humanity, as his bed-room was the universe. If, usually, all sick persons concentrate their attention on the little round which their eyes can see, and if their egotism takes the form of subordinating themselves to the people and the things

of that sick room, we may imagine of what an old bachelor is capable without domestic affections, and who has never known love. In the course of twenty days, Pons had been brought, at moments, to regret that he had not married Madeleine Vivet! Therefore, in these same twenty days, Madame Cibot had already gained an immense hold over the patient's mind, who saw himself lost without her; for, as to Schmucke, he was only a second self for the poor sick man. The wonderful art of the Cibot consisted, unknown, perhaps, to herself, in giving utterance to Pons's own thoughts.

"Ah, here comes the doctor," she said, as the bell rang.

She left Pons all alone, knowing perfectly well that the Jew and Rémonencq had arrived.

"Don't make any noise, gentlemen," she said, "lest he should suspect something! for he is mighty sharp when it is anything about his treasures."

"It will be enough just to walk through the room," said the Jew, who had come provided with an opera glass and a magnifier.

The room which held the chief part of the Pons collection was one of those ancient salons such as architects employed by the French nobility designed, twenty-five feet wide by thirty long, and thirteen feet in height. The pictures which Pons possessed, to the number of sixty-seven, were hung on the four walls of this salon, which was paneled in wood and painted in white and gold. But the white yellowed, the gold reddened, with time, and offered only

harmonious tones which did not conflict with the pictures. Fourteen statues raised on their columns were placed either in the angles of the room or between the pictures, on pedestals made by Boulle. Buffets of ebony, all carved and of a royal richness, adorned the lower part of the walls to the height of the elbow. These buffets contained the curiosities. In the middle of the salon a row of credence-tables in carved wood presented the greatest rarities of human workmanship,—ivories, bronzes, wood-carvings, enamels, goldsmith's work, porcelains, etc.

As soon as the Jew had entered this sanctuary he went straight to four masterpieces which he recognized as the finest of this collection, and by masters whose works were lacking in his own. These were for him what are for the naturalists those *desiderata* which drive them to undertake journeys from the setting to the rising sun, to the tropics, over deserts, over prairies, across savannas, and through the depths of virgin forests. The first picture was by Sébastien del Piombo, the second, by Fra Bartolomeo della Porta, the third was a landscape by Hobbema, and the last, a portrait of a woman by Albert Dürer—four jewels! Sébastien del Piombo is, in the art of painting, like a brilliant point in which three schools had met, bringing each of them its highest qualities. Originally a Venetian painter, he went to Rome and took up the style of Raphael under the direction of Michael Angelo, who wished to pit him against Raphael and contest, in the person of one of his lieutenants, the supremacy

of that sovereign-pontiff of art. Thus this indolent genius had melted together Venetian color, Florentine composition, and the Raphaelesque manner, in the rare pictures which he deigned to paint, and of which the cartoons were designed, it is said, by Michael Angelo. The perfection to which this painter, thus armed with triple power, arrived, may be seen by studying in the museum of Paris, the portrait of Baccio Bandinelli, which may be compared with *l'Homme au gant* of Titian, with the portrait of an *Old Man* in which Raphael combined his own perfection with that of Correggio, or with the *Charles VIII.* of Lionardo da Vinci, without this picture losing by the comparison. These four pearls are of the same order, the same quality of light, the same fulness, the same brilliancy, the same value. Human art can go no further. It is superior to nature, which can only make the original live its day. Of this great genius, of this palette immortal but of an incurable indolence, Pons possessed a *Chevalier de Malte en Prière,* painted on slate, of a freshness, a finish, and a depth greater even than those qualities in the portrait by Baccio Bandinelli. The Fra Bartolomeo, which represented *The Holy Family,* would have been taken for a picture by Raphael by many connoisseurs. The Hobbema should bring sixty thousand francs at public auction. As to the Albert Dürer, this *Portrait of a Woman* was similar to that of the famous *Holzschuer* of Nuremberg, for which the kings of Bavaria, of Holland, and of Prussia have on several

occasions, and vainly, offered two hundred thousand francs. Was she the wife or the daughter of the Chevalier Holzschuer, the friend of Albert Dürer? The hypothesis may be considered a certainty, for the woman of Pons's collection is represented in an attitude which supposes a pendant, and the heraldic insignia are disposed in the same manner in both portraits. Moreover, the *ætatis suæ XLI.* is in perfect accordance with the age given on the portrait so religiously guarded by the Holzschuer family in Nuremberg, and of which the engraving has recently been finished.

*

Élie Magus had tears in his eyes as he looked alternately at these four masterpieces.

"I will give you two thousand francs commission for each of those pictures, if you will help me to get them for forty thousand francs!—" he whispered in the ear of the Cibot, stupefied at this fortune which fell from heaven.

The admiration, or to speak more truly, the ecstasy of the Jew had produced such disorder in his mind and in all his miserly habits that for once, as we see, his Jewish soul was overthrown.

"What about me?—" said Rémonencq, who knew nothing of pictures.

"Everything here is of equal value," whispered Magus slyly in the Auvergnat's ears. "Take any ten of the pictures at hazard and on the same conditions, and your fortune is made!"

These three thieves were still looking at each other, each a prey to his voluptuous enjoyment,—the greatest of all,—the satisfaction of success in the pursuit of fortune, when the voice of the sick man rang out vibrating like the sound of a bell.

"Who is there?" cried Pons.

"Monsieur, lie down again!" exclaimed the Cibot, springing towards Pons and forcing him back into his bed. "There now, do you wish to kill yourself?—Well, now, it is not Monsieur Poulain, it is

that good Rémonencq, who is so uneasy about you that he came to ask how you are!—You are so beloved that all the house is astir about you. What are you afraid of?"

"But it seemed to me that there were several of you there," said the sick man.

"Several! Well, that's good.—Ah, now! are you dreaming?—You will end by going crazy, take my word for it!—There, see now!"

She went and opened the door quickly, made a sign to Magus to go away, and to Rémonencq to come forward.

"Well, my good monsieur," said the Auvergnat, for whose instruction she had spoken, "I came to hear how you are. The whole house is in a worry on your account—Nobody likes that death should come into their house!—And, besides, Papa Monistrol, whom you know very well, sent me to say that if you wanted any money, he was at your service.—"

"He sent you here to get a look at my bibelots!—" said the old collector, with a bitterness that was full of suspicion.

In diseases of the liver, the patients nearly always develop special and momentary antipathies; they concentrate their ill-humor on some object or on some person, it does not matter what or who. Now, Pons imagined that some one was after his treasure, he was possessed with the fixed idea of watching over it, and he was constantly sending Schmucke to see if any one had slipped into his sanctuary.

"It is plenty fine enough, your collection," said Rémonencq astutely, "to tempt all the *chineurs;* I don't know much about high-class curiosities, but monsieur is thought to be so great a connoisseur that, though I am not well posted in these things, I would be willing to buy from monsieur with my eyes shut,—if monsieur has sometimes need of money, for nothing costs like these cursed sicknesses —why, my sister, in ten days, spent thirty sous for medicines, when she had her blood upset, and when she could have been well cured without that. —The doctors are cheats who profit by our weakness to—"

"Good-day; thank you, monsieur," replied Pons to the old-iron merchant, looking at him suspiciously.

"I will show him the way out," said Madame Cibot, in a low voice, to her patient, "for fear he should touch anything."

"Yes, yes," replied the sick man, thanking her with a look.

The Cibot closed the door of the bed-room, an action which at once aroused Pons's suspicion. She found Magus standing motionless in front of the four pictures. This immobility, this rapt admiration, can be comprehended only by those whose souls are open to ideal beauty, to the ineffable sentiment which causes the perfection of a work of art, and who remain rooted on their feet for hours in the museum before the *Jocunda* of Lionardo da Vinci, before the *Antiope* of Correggio, the masterpiece of this painter, before *la Maîtresse du Titien,*

the *Holy Family* of Andrea del Sarto, before the *Enfants entourés de fleurs* of Dominichino, the little cameo of Raphael, his portrait of the *Old Man*, the greatest of all the masterpieces of art.

"Get away without making any noise!" said she.

The Jew went slowly, walking backwards, gazing at the pictures as he went, as a lover looks at a mistress to whom he bids adieu. When he was on the landing, the Cibot, to whom this earnest contemplation had given some ideas, tapped Magus on his skinny arm.

"You must give me four thousand francs for each picture! if not, no bargain—"

"I am so poor!" said Magus. "If I want those pictures, it is for the pure love of art, my good lady!"

"You are such a dry stick, my old fellow," said the concierge, "that I can imagine that kind of love. But if you do not promise me to-day sixteen thousand francs before Rémonencq, to-morrow it will be twenty thousand."

"I promise the sixteen, replied the Jew, frightened at the cupidity of this concierge.

"By what can he swear, a Jew?—" asked the Cibot of Rémonencq.

"You can trust him," said the old-iron merchant. He is as honest a man as I am."

"Very well. And you!" she demanded, "if I give you some of the pictures to sell, what will you pay me?—"

"Half the profits," said Rémonencq promptly.

"I would rather have a sum down. I am not in the business," replied the Cibot.

"You understand very well making bargains!" said Élie Magus, smiling. "You would make a famous dealer."

"I offer to go into partnership with her, body and goods," said the Auvergnat, taking Madame Cibot's plump arm and tapping it with the force of a hammer. "I don't ask of her anything else to put in the business but her beauty! You are very wrong to hold on to your Turk of a Cibot and to his needle! Is it a little concierge who can enrich a beauty like you? Ah, what a figure you would cut in a shop on the boulevard, in the middle of all the curiosities, chattering with the customers and twisting them around your finger! Come, you leave that lodge of yours when you have feathered your nest here, and you will see what we will do, we two!"

"Feathered my nest!" exclaimed the Cibot. "I am incapable of taking from here so much as the value of a pin, do you hear Rémonencq?" she cried. "I am known in the quarter as an honest woman, I am!"

Her eyes flamed.

"There, there, don't get angry!" said Élie Magus, "this Auvergnat seems to love you too much to mean to offend you."

"How she would draw the customers!" cried the Auvergnat.

"Now be fair, my good fellows," resumed Madame

Cibot, pacified, "and consider for yourselves how I am placed here!—Here's ten years that I have been wearing myself out, body and soul, for these two old bachelors there, without their ever having given me anything else but words.—Rémonencq can tell you how I've taken care of these two old chaps at a price, so that I lose twenty or thirty sous a day, all my savings have gone that way, I swear it by the soul of my mother!—the only author of my being that I have ever known; it's as true as I am born, and as the daylight above us, and may my coffee poison me if I lie one centime's worth!—Well, then, here's one on 'em going to die, isn't that sure? and he's the richest of these two men whom I've treated like my own children!—Would you believe it, my dear monsieur, that since the last twenty days, when I have been repeating to him that he's at death's door—for M. Poulain has given him over!—this skinflint there has not said one word about putting me in his will any more than if I didn't know him! My word of honor, we never get what's due us unless we take it, faith of an honest woman; for as to trusting yourself to the heirs!—I guess not! See now; words do not stink, all the world is blackguards!"

"That's true," said Élie Magus artfully, "and it is only such as we," he added, looking at Rémonencq, "who are the really honest men—"

"Don't take me up," resumed the Cibot. "I wasn't speaking of you—persons *pressing*, as the old actor said, are always *accepted!*—I swear to you

that those two gentlemen owe me now nearly three thousand francs, that the little that I had is already spent for their medicines and their affairs, and supposing they don't give me anything for all that I've advanced!—I am so stupid with my honesty that I don't dare to speak to 'em about it. Now, you should know what business is, my good monsieur, would you advise me to go to a lawyer?—"

"A lawyer," cried Rémonencq, "you know a great deal more than all the lawyers put together!"

The sound of a heavy body falling on the floor of the dining-room echoed through the wide space of the staircase.

"Ah! Mon Dieu!" cried the Cibot, "what's the matter? I do believe that it is my gentleman who has tumbled on the floor."

She gave a push to the two accomplices who rushed downstairs with agility, and then flew into the dining-room where she saw Pons lying at full length, in his nightshirt, in a dead faint! She took the old man in her arms, lifted him up like a feather, and carried him to his bed. When she had laid him back in it, she put a burnt feather under his nose, wet his temples with Eau-de-Cologne, and brought him back to his senses. Then, when she saw the eyes of Pons open and that consciousness had returned, she placed her arms akimbo.

"Without your slippers! and in your shirt-tail! It's enough to kill you! And why do you suspect me?—If that's how it is to be, good-bye to you, monsieur. After serving you ten years and paying out

my own money for your affairs until my savings are all spent, so as not to worry that poor Monsieur Schmucke, who goes crying down the stairs like a baby,—this is to be my reward! You go spying upon me.—God has punished you!—that's as it should be! And I who have had such a strain to carry you in my arms that I risked injuring myself for the rest of my days—Ah! Mon Dieu! And there's the door that I've left open—"

"Whom were you talking to?"

"What ideas!" cried the Cibot. "Ah! now, am I your slave? Have I got to render an account to you? Don't you know if you worry me so I'll plant my foot down right there! Then you can hire a nurse!"

Pons, terrified at this threat, revealed, unconsciously, to the Cibot the lengths to which she could go with this sword of Damocles.

"It is because I am so sick!" said he piteously.

"Oh, good enough!" replied the Cibot roughly.

She left Pons quite bewildered, a prey to remorse, admiring the clamorous devotion of his sick-nurse, reproaching himself, and not even feeling the great injury he had received in falling upon the flagging of the dining-room and aggravating the effects of his disease. Madame Cibot saw Schmucke coming up the stairway.

"Come monsieur!—I have bad news for you! Monsieur Pons has gone crazy!—Fancy! he got up without any clothes on him and followed me,— and he fell down right there at full length—Ask him

why, and he don't know nothing about it—He is very bad. I did nothing to provoke him to such violence, except to give him some ideas in talking to him about his early loves.—Who knows anything about the men? They are all old libertines—I was wrong to show him my arms, they made his eyes shine like carbuncles—"

Schmucke listened to Madame Cibot as if she were talking Hebrew.

"I have given myself such a wrench that I have got a hurt that will last me till the end of my days," added the Cibot, making believe to suffer from severe pains, and resolving to make the most of an idea that had come to her by chance, from a slight fatigue she felt in her muscles. "I am so stupid! When I saw him there stretched out on the ground, I took him up in my arms and I carried him to his bed just like a child, I did! But now I feel such a strain! Ah! I am sick!—I am going down into my own place, you take care of our sick man. I am going to send Cibot for Dr. Poulain for me! I'd rather die than see myself a cripple—"

She grasped the balustrade and rolled herself down the staircase, making a thousand contortions and uttering such plaintive moans that all the lodgers, much alarmed, came out from their apartments on the different landings. Schmucke supported the sufferer, shedding tears and explaining her great devotion. All the house, all the quarter, were soon acquainted with the sublime devotion of Madame Cibot who had given herself a mortal injury, they

said, by lifting one of the Nut-crackers in her arms. Schmucke, when he got back to Pons, revealed to him the sad condition of their factotum and each of them looked at the other as if saying, "What will become of us without her?—" Schmucke, observing the change in Pons's appearance, produced by his escapade, did not dare to scold him.

"Heng dat prig-à-prag. I vould radder haf eet purn dan loose mein frent," cried he, after Pons had told him of the cause of the accident. "To tout Montame Zipod, who has her safings lent to us! Dat ees not rigd; put eet ees your seegness, I know—"

"Ah! what an illness! I am changed, I feel it," said Pons. "I don't wish to make you unhappy, my good Schmucke."

"Scolt me," said Schmucke, "put leaf Montame Zipod alone."

*

Doctor Poulain cured, in a few days, Madame Cibot of the injury she pretended to have suffered, and his reputation received in the quarter of the Marais an extraordinary lustre from this cure which seemed miraculous. In Pons's room, he attributed his success to the excellent constitution of the patient, who resumed her attendance upon her two gentlemen on the seventh day, to their great satisfaction. This event augmented a hundredfold the influence, the tyranny of the concierge, over the household of the two Nut-crackers, who, during this week, had been forced to run into debt, but whose debts had been paid by her. The Cibot profited by the circumstance to obtain,—and with what ease!—from Schmucke a receipt for the two thousand francs which she declared she had lent to the two friends.

"Ah! what a doctor that Monsieur Poulain is," she said to Pons. "He will save you, my dear monsieur, for he dragged me out of my coffin! My poor Cibot thought I was dead!—Well, now, Monsieur Poulain must have told you while I was lying on my bed, I only thought of you. 'My God,' I used to say, 'take me and let my dear Monsieur Pons live—'"

"Poor dear Madame Cibot, you came near having a fatal hurt through me!"

"Ah! if it hadn't been for Monsieur Poulain, I

should have been by this time in that chemise of pine-wood to which we are all coming. Well, as that old actor used to say, 'when you are at the bottom of the grave, you can turn a somerset!' We must all have some philosophy. How did you get along without me?—"

"Schmucke nursed me," replied the sick man, "but our poor purse and our pupils have suffered for it—I don't know how he managed."

"Pe calm, Bons," cried Schmucke, "ve haf here in de goot Zipod our panker—"

"Don't speak of that, my poor lamb! You are both of you my children," cried the Cibot. "Our savings are all safe with you, come! you are as solid as the Bank of France. So long as we have a piece of bread you shall have half of it;—'taint worth talking about—"

"Boor Montame Zipod," said Schmucke, as he went away.

Pons said nothing.

"Would you believe it, my cherub," said the Cibot to the sick man, noticing that he was uneasy, "when death was hanging over me,—for I saw the flat-nosed one very near me!—the thing that worried me most was the thought of you poor dears left alone to take care of yourselves and of leaving my poor Cibot without a liard—my savings are such a trifle that I wouldn't speak to you about them if it wasn't in connection with my death and with Cibot, who is an angel! No, that good soul there, took care of me like a queen, and cried over me like a calf!—

But I felt sure of you, word of an honest woman, I did. I said to him, 'never mind Cibot, my gentlemen will never leave you to starve'—"

Pons made no reply to this attack *ad testamentum*, and the concierge kept silent, waiting for a word.

"I will recommend you to Schmucke," said the sick man, finally.

"Ah,"cried she, "anything you do will be right! I can trust to you, to your good heart—Don't speak of that ever, for you will make me ashamed, my good cherub; think only of getting well! You will live longer than the rest of us.—"

A profound anxiety took possession of the heart of Madame Cibot, she resolved to get some explanation from her gentleman on the subject of the legacy which he intended to leave her; and, as a preliminary step, she went out to call on Doctor Poulain in his own home that evening, after Schmucke's dinner, the latter taking his meals by the bedside of Pons since his friend had been sick.

Doctor Poulain lived in the Rue d'Orléans. He occupied a small ground-floor apartment consisting of an ante-chamber, a salon, and two bed-rooms. An office which adjoined the ante-chamber and which communicated with one of the two bed-rooms, that of the doctor, had been converted into a study. The kitchen and servant's bed-room, and a small cellar belonging to this suite of rooms were situated in the wing of the house, a vast structure erected under the Empire, on the site of an old mansion, the garden of which still remained. This garden

was divided among the three apartments on the ground-floor.

The suite of rooms belonging to the doctor had not been changed for forty years. The painting, the papering, the decorations, were all of the Empire. Forty years of dirt, of smoke, had defaced the mirrors, the friezes, the patterns of the wall paper, the ceilings, and the paint. This little abode in the depths of the Marais cost still one thousand francs a year. Madame Poulain, the doctor's mother, sixty-seven years of age, was spending her last years in the second bed-room. She worked for the breeches-makers. She sewed gaiters, leathern breeches, braces, waistbands,—in fact on all the various parts of that garment now falling into disuse. Occupied with the care of her son's household and of her only servant, she never went out, and took the air in the little garden which was entered by a glass door leading from the salon. A widow for the last twenty years, she had, at the death of her husband, sold the business of breeches-making to her foreman, who agreed to give her enough work to enable her to earn about thirty sous a day. She had sacrificed everything to the education of her only son, resolved, at any price, to give him a situation superior to that of his father. Proud of her Æsculapius, believing in his success, she still continued to sacrifice everything to him, happy in taking care of him, in economizing for him, thinking only of his comfort, and loving him with intelligence, which is more than all mothers

know how to do. Thus, Madame Poulain, who remembered very well that she had been a mere work-woman did not wish to injure her son or expose him to ridicule, for the good woman used her s's very much as Madame Cibot used her negatives; she hid herself in her bed-room, of her own choice, whenever by chance some distinguished patients came to consult the doctor or when his fellow collegians or colleagues of the hospital presented themselves. Thus the doctor had never been obliged to blush for his mother, whom he venerated, and in whom the defects of education were well compensated by this sublime tenderness. The sale of the breeches-maker's business had produced about twenty thousand francs. The widow had placed them in the *Grand-livre* in 1820, and the eleven hundred francs of dividend which they brought her represented the whole of her means. So for many years the neighbors had been in the habit of seeing in the garden the doctor's linen and that of his mother, displayed on the clothes-lines. Madame Poulain and her servant washed everything at home as a matter of economy. This domestic detail had injured the doctor a good deal, people were unable to recognize his talent when they saw him so poor. The eleven hundred francs paid the rent. The work of Madame Poulain, a good, fat, little, old woman, had during the early days, sufficed for all the expenses of the humble household. After twelve years of persistence in this stony path, the doctor had come to earn about three thousand francs

a year, so that Madame Poulain could now dispose of about five thousand francs annually. This was, for those who know Paris, just enough for the strict necessities of life.

The salon where the patients waited was meanly furnished with that well-known vulgar mahogany sofa, covered with yellow Utrecht velvet, with its pattern of flowers, four arm-chairs, and six common chairs, a pier-table, and a tea-table,—all of them inherited from the old breeches-maker and all of his particular choice. The clock, always kept under a glass case, between two Egyptian candelabra, was in the shape of a lyre. It was a question by what means the curtains which hung at the windows could possibly have been preserved so long, for they were of yellow calico with the pattern of red roses from the manufactory of Jouy. Oberkampf had received the compliments of the Emperor for these atrocious products of the cotton industry in the year 1809. The doctor's study being furnished in this style, the furniture of the paternal bed-chamber had supplied the means. The aspect of the room was dismal, cold, and poverty-stricken. What patient could possibly believe in the skill of a doctor who, without renown, found himself without any furniture in a time when the art of advertising is all-powerful, and when the candelabra of the Place de la Concorde are gilded to console the poor man by persuading him that he is a rich citizen?

The ante-chamber served as a dining-room. The servant worked there when she was not employed

in the kitchen or when she was not in the company of the doctor's mother. The first glance on entering revealed the decent poverty which reigned in this melancholy apartment, left empty during half the day, as the eye rested on the little curtains of red muslin covering a solitary window looking out upon the court. The cupboard evidently held scraps of mouldy pâtés, chipped plates, endless corks, napkins of a week's use—in short all the necessary ignominies of the humbler Parisian household which, from there, could go nowhere but into the bag of the rag-picker. Thus, in these days, when the five-franc piece is stamped on all minds, and rolls under all tongues, the doctor, though thirty years of age and possessed of a mother without relatives, remained a bachelor. In the course of ten years he had never encountered the very smallest pretext for a romance in the families to which his profession gave him access, for he cured only those in a sphere in which the conditions resembled his own; he only saw households similar to his own,—those of the minor employees or of small manufacturers. His richest clients were the butchers, bakers, and the larger retail shopkeepers of the quarter, people who usually attributed their cure to nature, in order to be able to pay the doctor only forty sous a visit, seeing that he came on foot. In the medical profession, a cabriolet is of more consequence than knowledge.

A life of commonplace events, without opportunities, ends by reacting upon even the most

adventurous mind. The man conforms to his fate, he accepts the commonness of his life. So Doctor Poulain, after ten years' practice, continued his toil of Sisyphus without the sense of despair which made his first years so bitter. Nevertheless, he cherished a dream, for all the inhabitants of Paris have their visions. Rémonencq had one, Madame Cibot had hers. Doctor Poulain hoped to be called in by some rich and influential invalid; then to obtain through the influence of this invalid, whom he should infallibly cure, an appointment as doctor-in-chief to some hospital, or as doctor in the prison, or to the theatres of the boulevard, or in some government office. He had already obtained by such means his place as physician to the *Mairie*. Called in by Madame Cibot, he had attended and cured M. Pillerault, the proprietor of the house in which the Cibots were concierges. M. Pillerault, maternal great-uncle to Madame la Comtesse Popinot, the minister's wife, having taken an interest in this young man, whose secret poverty had been fathomed by him in a visit of acknowledgment, obtained from his great-nephew, the minister, who venerated him, this official situation which the doctor had occupied for five years and of which the meagre emoluments had come just in time to keep him from carrying out a desperate determination to emigrate. To leave France is for a Frenchman a most melancholy proceeding. Doctor Poulain hastened to thank the Comte Popinot; but the physician to this statesman proving to be the illustrious Bianchon, the

aspirant comprehended that he could never hope to obtain a footing in that house. The poor doctor, after having flattered himself that he had obtained the protection of an influential statesman, of one of the twelve or fifteen cards which a powerful hand has been shuffling for the last sixteen years on the green baize of the council-board, found himself plunged back into the Marais, where he splashed about among the small bourgeois, and where he had charge of recording their deaths, at a salary of twelve hundred francs a year.

Doctor Poulain, who had been a sufficiently distinguished student and who had now become a prudent practitioner, did not lack experience. Moreover, his deaths caused no scandal and he was able to study all diseases *in animâ vili.* Judge with what bitterness he was nourished! So that the expression of his face, already long and melancholy, was sometimes frightful. Set, in a yellow parchment, eyes with the gleam of Tartuffe and the sharpness of Alceste; then picture to yourself the deportment, the attitude, the look of this man who, knowing himself to be just as skilful a doctor as the illustrious Bianchon, felt himself held down in an obscure sphere by a hand of iron! Doctor Poulain could not help comparing his receipts of ten francs, in his fortunate days, with those of Bianchon, which amounted to five or six hundred! Does not this enable us to conceive of the hatreds of democracy? This man of ambition, moreover, thus thrown back on himself, had no cause for self-

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reproach. He had already wooed fortune by inventing certain purgative pills, like those of Morrison. He had entrusted this enterprise to a comrade at the hospital, a student who had become a druggist; but the druggist, amorous of a dancer at the Ambigu-Comique, ended in bankruptcy, and the patent for the purgative pills having been taken out in his name, this immense discovery enriched his successor. The bankrupt departed for Mexico, the land of gold, carrying with him one thousand francs of poor Poulain's savings, who, by way of consolation, was treated as a usurer by the dancer, from whom he attempted to recover his money. Since his good fortune in the care of old Pillerault, not one rich client had presented himself. Poulain scoured all the Marais on foot like a lean cat, and for his twenty visits obtained from two to forty sous. The client who paid well was for him that phantasmal bird known in all sublunary realms as the "white crow."

The young lawyer without cases, the young doctor without patients, are the two greatest expressions of decent despair, peculiar to the city of Paris, that despair chill, silent, clothed in a black coat and trousers, whose whitening seams recall the tin roofs of the garrets in a waistcoat of too shiny satin, a hat sacredly cared for, old gloves, and a cotton shirt. It is a poem of sadness, sombre as are the secrets of the Conciergerie. Other forms of poverty, those of the poet, of the artist, of the actor, of the musician, are cheered by the gaiety natural to

the arts, by the careless ease of Bohemia into which one enters at first, and which leads to the Thébaïdes of genius. But these two black coats which go afoot, worn by the two professions for whom all things are like an open wound, to whom humanity shows only its shameful aspects; these two men have in the dreary flattening out of their opening career, sinister and aggressive expressions, in which hatred and ambition concentrated, flame forth in glances like those of the first gleams of a smoldering fire. When two college friends meet, after a separation of twenty years, the rich man avoids his poor comrade, he does not recognize him, he is terrified at the gulf which fate has opened between them. The one has traversed life on the mettlesome steeds of fortune or on the golden clouds of success; the other has plodded along the subterranean ways of Parisian sewers and carries their stigmata upon him. How many old comrades avoided the doctor at the mere sight of his coat and his waistcoat!

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It is now easy to see why Doctor Poulain had been so willing to play his part in the comedy of Madame Cibot's illness. All his covetousness, all his ambitions, may be imagined. Not finding the slightest sign of injury in any of the concierge's organs, admiring the regularity of her pulse, the perfect ease of all her movements, and hearing her utter distressing cries, he understood that she had some good reason for pretending to be at death's door. The rapid cure of this serious pretended malady being likely to make him talked about in the arrondissement, he exaggerated the pretended rupture of the concierge, and he talked of taking it in time and reducing it. Finally, he subjected the concierge to pretended remedies, to a fictitious operation, which were crowned with complete success. He hunted up in the arsenal of the extraordinary cures of Desplein a peculiar case; he applied it to Madame Cibot, modestly attributing the cure to the great surgeon, and gave himself out for his imitator. Such are the tricks of men who are endeavoring to rise in Paris. Everything serves them for a ladder with which to mount on a scene; but as everything wears out, even the rungs of a ladder, the beginners in each profession no longer know of what wood to make these steps for themselves. Sometimes the Parisian turns rebellious. Weary of building pedestals, he

sulks, like a spoiled child, and will have no more idols; or, to speak more accurately, men of talent are sometimes lacking for this infatuation. The vein from which is extracted the ore of genius has its interruptions; the Parisian turns recalcitrant and will not forever gild or adore the mediocrities.

Madame Cibot entered with her accustomed brusqueness, and surprised the doctor at table with his old mother, eating a salad of lamb's lettuce, the cheapest of all salads, having for dessert only a thin wedge of Brie cheese between a plate sparsely filled with the dried fruit called "the four mendicants,"—figs, nuts, almonds, and raisins, in which might be seen many stalks of raisins, and a plate of miserable, shrunken apples.

"You can stay, mother," said the doctor, retaining Madame Poulain by the arm. "This is Madame Cibot, of whom I have spoken so often."

"My respects, madame, my duties to you, monsieur," said the Cibot, accepting the chair which the doctor presented to her. "Oh, and that is your mother? She is very happy to have a son who has so much talent; for he is my savior, madame, he pulled me out of the grave."

The widow Poulain found Madame Cibot charming, when she heard her thus sounding the praises of her son.

"It is to say to you, my dear Monsieur Poulain, between ourselves, that poor Monsieur Pons is very sick and that I have something to say to you relating to him—"

"Let us go into the salon," said Doctor Poulain, indicating the servant to Madame Cibot by a significant gesture.

In the salon, the Cibot explained at length her position with the two Nut-crackers, she repeated the story of her loan to them, embellishing it sufficiently, and recounted the immense services which she had rendered during the last ten years to MM. Pons and Schmucke. To hear her, you would have thought that these two old men would be no longer in existence had it not been for her maternal cares. In short, she posed as an angel, and uttered so many and so various lies, duly sprinkled with tears, that she ended by melting the old Madame Poulain.

"You understand, my dear monsieur," she said finishing, "that it would be well to know just what to expect of that which Monsieur Pons is going to do for me in case he should die, which is what I hope very much will not happen, for the taking care of these two innocents, do you see, madame, that is my life; but if one of them should leave me I would look out for the other. As for me, nature constructed me to be the rival of maternity. Without someone in whom I can interest myself, of whom I can make a baby, I do not know what would become of me.—So, if Monsieur Poulain will do it, he can render me a service, which I shall not know how to be thankful enough for, that would be to speak to Monsieur Pons about me. Mon Dieu! A thousand francs of annuity, is that too much, I ask you, yourself? It is just so much gained for Monsieur Schmucke.—For

that matter, our dear sick man has said to me that he would commend me to that poor German, who will then be, according to his ideas, his heir.—But what kind of a man is it who does not know how to sew two ideas together in French, and he moreover is quite capable of taking himself over to Germany, so much he will be in despair over the death of his friend.—"

"My dear Mame Cibot," replied the doctor, becoming serious. "These kinds of affairs do not concern the physician, and the exercise of my profession would be forbidden to me if it were known that I had interfered in the testamentary dispositions of one of my patients. The law does not permit a doctor to accept a legacy from one of his patients—"

"What a beast of a law! But what is it that would hinder me from sharing my legacy with you?" responded promptly the Cibot.

"I will go further still," said the doctor. "My conscience as a physician forbids me to speak to M. Pons of his death. In the first place, he is not in a sufficiently dangerous condition for that; then, this statement on my part might cause him a shock, which might do him real injury and so render his malady mortal."

"But I don't mince matters very much," cried Madame Cibot, "in telling him to put his affairs in order, and that he cannot be much worse than he is—He is used to that! You need not fear."

"Say to me no more about it, my dear Madame Cibot! These things are not at all in the domain of the doctor. They concern only the notaries."

"But, my dear Monsieur Poulain, if M. Pons should ask of you of his own accord how he is, and if he would do well to take his precautions, then would you refuse to say to him that it is an excellent help toward recovering the health to have everything arranged.—Then you could slip in a little word for me."

"Ah! should he speak to me about making his will, I would not dissuade him in any way," said Doctor Poulain.

"All right, that is agreed," cried Madame Cibot.

"I have come to thank you for your pains," she added, and slipping into the doctor's hand a little paper which contained three pieces of gold; "that is all that I can do at present. Ah! if I were only rich you would be so too, my dear M. Poulain, you are the image of the good God on earth. You have there, madame, for a son an angel!"

The Cibot rose, Madame Poulain saluted her with amiability and the doctor reconducted her out to the landing. There, this frightful Lady Macbeth of the streets was suddenly illuminated by an infernal light; she comprehended that the doctor could be made her accomplice, since he had accepted an honorarium for the pretended malady.

"But how, my dear M. Poulain," said she to him, "after having pulled me out of that affair of my accident, can you refuse to save me from poverty by speaking only a few words?"

The doctor felt that he had allowed the devil to take him by a lock of his head, and that this

lock was tightly rolled around the pitiless claw of the fiery hand. Frightened at the idea of losing his honesty for so small a thing, he replied to this diabolical idea by another not less diabolical.

"Listen, my dear Madame Cibot," said he, turning her back, and leading her into his study. "I am going to pay you the debt of gratitude which I contracted toward you, to whom I owe my position in the Mairie.—"

"We will share it equally," said she, quickly

"What!" asked the doctor.

"The inheritance," replied the concierge.

"You do not know me," returned the doctor, assuming the pose of Valerius Publicola. "Do not speak any more of that. I have for a college comrade, a young man, very intelligent, and we are all the more closely united that we have had the same fortunes in life. While I was studying medicine, he was following law; while I was still in the college, he was spreading outside in the office of an attorney Maître Couture. The son of a shoemaker, as I am the son of a breeches-maker, he has not found very lively sympathies around him, but he has none the more found capital; for, after all, capital is not obtained by sympathy. He has not been able to carry on his profession excepting in the provinces, at Mantes.—Now, the people in the provinces comprehend so poorly the Paris intelligence, that they have put a thousand injuries upon my friend."

"The beasts!" cried the Cibot.

"Yes," replied the doctor, "for they have banded together against him so effectively that he has been forced to sell out his practice under circumstances which have made it appear that he had committed a wrong; the *Procureur-du-Roi* interfered in the case; this magistrate was a native of the country, and he took sides with his fellow provincials. This poor fellow, still more seedy and more threadbare than I am, and lives just as I do, his name is Fraisier, has taken refuge in our arrondissement, and is reduced to pleading before the justice of the peace and the ordinary tribunals of police. He lives near here, Rue de la Perle. Go to Number 9, you will mount three flights and on the landing you will see painted in gold letters: CABINET DE M. FRAISIER on a little square of red morocco. Fraisier takes special charge of the difficult affairs of MM. the concierges, of the workpeople, and of all the poor in our arrondissement, at moderate prices. He is an honest man, for I do not need to say to you, that, with his opportunities, if he were a knave he would roll in his carriage. I will see my friend Fraisier this evening. Go to see him to-morrow early; he knows M. Louchard, *Garde de Commerce;* M. Tabareau, bailiff of the justice of the peace; M. Vitel, *the juge-de-paix,* and M. Trognon, notary; he is already connected with the most important men of affairs of the quarter. If he takes charge of your interests, if you can get M. Pons to take him for counsel, you will have in him, do you

see, another yourself. Only, do not go to him as to me, to propose some compromise which would affect his honor; but he has intelligence, you will come to an understanding. Then, when it comes to recompensing his services, I will be your intermediary."

Madame Cibot looked at the doctor malignantly.

"Is he not the man of law," said she, "who pulled the haberdasher of the Rue Vieille-du-Temple, Madame Florimond, out of that bad hole in which she was, regarding the inheritance of her good friend?—"

"It is the same man," said the doctor.

"Was it not horrible," cried the Cibot, "that after having obtained for her two thousand francs of income, she refused to him her hand which he asked, and that she considered herself quit with him, they say, by giving him twelve shirts of Holland linen, twenty-four handkerchiefs, in fact, a whole trousseau!"

"My dear Madame Cibot," said the doctor, "the trousseau was worth one thousand francs and Fraisier, who was then just beginning in the quarter, had plenty of need of it. She had moreover, paid the amount of his expenses without saying anything about it.—That affair there has brought others to Fraisier, he is now very much occupied; but, in my class, our customers are worth—"

"There are none but the just who suffer here," replied the concierge. "Well, good-bye and thank you, my dear M. Poulain."

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Here commences the drama, or if you prefer, the terrible comedy, of the death of a celibate, delivered, through the force of circumstances, to the rapacity of avaricious natures grouped around his bed, and which in this case had for allies, the keenest of passions, that of picture-mania; the avarice of the Sieur Fraisier, who if seen in his cavern would make you shudder, and the thirst of an Auvergnat, capable of anything, even of a crime, in order to procure capital for himself. This comedy, to which this part of the history serves in some sort as the curtain-raiser, has moreover for actors all the persons who up to the present time have appeared upon the scene.

The abasement of words is one of those curiosities in our manners which to be justly explained would require volumes. To write to an attorney, addressing him as *Homme de loi*, man of law, would be to offend him as much as you would offend a wholesale merchant of colonial produce by addressing him thus in your letter,—"Monsieur So and So, Grocer." A sufficiently large number of people of the world, who should know, since in that lies all their knowledge, these delicate distinctions of the *savoir-vivre*, are still ignorant that the qualification of "man of letters" is the greatest insult that you can offer an author. The word *Monsieur* is the

greatest example of the life and death of words. *Monsieur* means *Monseigneur*. This title, formerly so considerable, now reserved for kings by the transformation of *Sieur* into *Sire*, is given now to everybody, and nevertheless *Messire*, which is no other than the double of the word *Monsieur*, and its equivalent, stirs up articles in the republican journals when by chance it appears in a funeral notice. Magistrates, councilors, jurisconsults, judges, advocates, ministerial officers, attorneys, bailiffs, counsels, procurators, agents and counsel for the defence, are titles under which are known those who administer justice or who are in its service. The two lower rounds of this ladder are the "practitioner" and the "man of law." The practitioner, commonly known as a *recors*, bailiff's follower, is an officer of the law by chance, his office is to assure the execution of judgments; that is in civil affairs, to be a second-hand executioner. As to the man of law, he is the scapegoat peculiar to the profession. He is to justice what the "man of letters" is to literature. In all the professions in France the competition which devours them has found terms of disparagement. Each condition has its peculiar by-word. The contempt which accents the words "man of letters" and "man of law" stops at the plural. You can say very well, without offending anyone, *gens de lettres* and *gens de loi*. But at Paris each profession has its tail-end, certain individuals who exercise the trade on a level with the business of the streets, with the common people.

Thus the man of law, the small business agent, exists still in certain quarters, as there is still found at the Halle the small lender at exorbitant interest who is to a great banker that which M. Fraisier was to the Company of Advocates. What is curious is that the lower classes are afraid of the ministerial officers, as they are of fashionable restaurants. They go to these pettifoggers just as they go to drink in the taverns. Everything on the same level is the general lot of the different social spheres. It is only superior natures which live to mount the heights, which do not suffer in finding themselves in the presence of their superiors, which make their own place, like Beaumarchais dropping the watch of the great lord who wished to humiliate him; but such parvenus, especially those who know how to make their swaddling-clothes disappear, are very great exceptions to the rule.

The day after, at six o'clock in the morning, Madame Cibot examined in the Rue de la Perle, the house in which dwelt her future counselor, the Sieur Fraisier, man of law. It was one of those old houses formerly inhabited by the small bourgeoisie. You entered it by an alley. The ground floor, partly occupied by the porter's lodge and partly by the shop of a cabinet-maker whose workrooms and storerooms encumbered a little interior court, was divided by the alley and by the casing of the stairway, devoured by saltpetre and dampness. This house seemed full of leprosy.

Madame Cibot went straight to the lodge. She

found there one of Cibot's confreres, a shoemaker, his wife and two young children, lodged in a space of about ten feet square lit from the little court. A most cordial acquaintance was immediately established between the two women as soon as the Cibot had declared her profession, given her name and spoken of her house in the Rue de Normandie. After a quarter of an hour employed in gossip, and during which the concierge of M. Fraisier prepared the breakfast of the shoemaker and the two children, Madame Cibot brought the conversation around to the tenants and spoke of the man of law.

"I have come to consult him," said she, "about some business; one of his friends, Doctor Poulain, has recommended me to him. Do you know Doctor Poulain?"

"I should say so," said the concierge of the Rue de la Perle. "He saved my baby which had the croup."

"He saved me also—me, madame—what kind of a man is he, this M. Fraisier?"

"He is a man, my dear lady," replied the concierge's wife, "from whom you get with great difficulty, the money for carrying his letters, at the end of the month."

This answer sufficed to the intelligent Cibot.

"One can be poor and honest," she observed.

"I should hope so," replied Fraisier's concierge.

"We do not roll on either gold or silver, not even on sous, but we have not a liard that doesn't belong to us."

The Cibot recognized herself in this language. "Well, my dear," she replied, "one can trust him, can you not?"

"Ah! when Monsieur Fraisier wishes good to some one, I have heard it said by Madame Florimond that he has not his equal."

"And why did she not marry him?" demanded quickly the Cibot, "since it is to him she owes her fortune. That would be something for a little haberdasher, who had been kept by an old man, to become the wife of an advocate.—"

"Why?" said the concierge, drawing Madame Cibot into the alley. "You are going up to see him, are you not, madame?—Very well, when you are in his office, you will know why."

The stairway, lit from the little court by windows with sliding shutters, announced that, with the exception of the owner and the Sieur Fraisier, the other tenants followed mechanical professions. The muddy steps carried the signs of each trade in presenting to the view brass shavings, broken buttons, scraps of gauze, bits of spartum for matting, etc. The apprentices from the upper stories had designed obscene caricatures on the walls. The last words of the concierge in exciting the curiosity of Madame Cibot had naturally decided her to consult Doctor Poulain's friend, but in resolving to employ him in her affairs only after having come to a conclusion about him.

"I ask myself often how Madame Sauvage can remain in his service," said as a sort of commentary

the concierge who followed Madame Cibot. "I go with you, madame, because I am carrying up the milk and the newspaper to my proprietor."

Arrived at the second floor over the entresol the Cibot found herself before a door of the most villainous character. The painting, of a bad red, was covered, over a space of twenty centimetres, with that black layer which is left by the contact of many hands, after a certain time, and which the architects endeavor to combat in elegant apartments by the application of glass panels over and under the locks. The wicket of this door, blocked by scoria of metal like that which the restaurant keepers use to give a look of age to their wine-bottles, served only to give it still more its right to be called the gate of a prison, and was moreover in accord with its clover-leaf shaped iron-work, with its formidable hinges and great nail-heads. Some miser, or some scribbler at odds with the whole world, might have invented this apparatus. The lead pipe, through which flowed the waste waters of the household, added its quota to the smells of the stairway, of which the ceiling showed everywhere arabesques designed with the smoke of candles, and what arabesques! The cord of the door, at the end of which hung a dirty olive shaped knob, sounded a little bell whose feeble tone revealed a crack in the metal. It seemed exactly in harmony with the whole of this hideous picture. The Cibot heard the sound of a heavy step and the asthmatic respiration of a powerful woman, and Madame Sauvage showed

herself. She was one of those old women designed by Adrien Brauwer in his *Witches Departing for the Sabbat,* a woman five feet six inches in height, with a soldier-like visage much more bearded than that of the Cibot, of an unwholesome grossness, clothed in a hideous flowered gown of printed cotton goods, with a handkerchief around her head, still using curling papers made of the printed writs which her master received gratuitously, and carrying in her ears a sort of carriage-wheels in gold. This female cerberus held in her hand a tin skillet, much indented, from which the dripping milk diffused one smell the more in the stairway despite its nauseating sourness.

"What is it that you wish for your service, *Médème?*" asked Mme. Sauvage.

And, with a menacing air she threw on the Cibot, whom she found, without doubt, too well dressed, a look all the more murderous as her eyes were naturally bloodshot.

"I have come to see Monsieur Fraisier from his friend, Dr. Poulain."

"Come in, *Médème,*" replied the Sauvage with an air suddenly becoming very amiable, and which proved that she had been notified of this morning visit.

And, after having made a theatrical reverence, this half-male servant of the Sieur Fraisier opened the door of the office, which looked out on the street, and in which was the former advocate of Mantes.

This office resembled exactly those little stalls of

the under-sheriffs of the third class, in which the pigeon-holes are in blackened wood, where the bundles of papers are all so old that they have beards, in true clerkly fashion, where the red tapes hang in lamentable disorder, where the paper boxes smell of the gambols of mice, where the floor is gray with dust and the ceiling yellow with smoke. The mirror of the chimney was clouded, the cast-iron andirons supported an economical log, the clock in modern marquetry was worth sixty francs, having been purchased at some sale enforced by the law, and the candelabra which accompanied it were of zinc, but they affected rococo shapes with very ill success, and the painting, scaled off in many parts, revealed the metal underneath. M. Fraisier, a little, dry and unwholesome-looking man, with a red face on which the pimples betrayed the very bad state of his blood, and who, moreover, incessantly scratched his right arm, whose wig, shoved far back on his head, revealed a cranium of the color of brick, and of a sinister expression, rose from a cane-seated chair where he had been sitting on a circular cushion of green morocco. He assumed an agreeable air and a piping voice, saying, in pushing forward a chair:

"Madame Cibot, I suppose?—"

"Yes, monsieur," replied the concierge, who lost her natural assurance.

Madame Cibot was frightened by this voice which resembled a good deal that of the bell, and also by a glance still more lividly green than the greenish

eyes of her future counsel. The office smelt so strongly of this Fraisier that you could readily imagine that the air in it was pestilential. The Cibot understood then why Madame Florimond had not become Madame Fraisier.

"Poulain has spoken to me of you, my dear lady, said the man of law in that false voice which is commonly known as a "little voice," but which remains always sharp and clear, like country wine.

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Then this agent of affairs endeavored to drape himself by bringing together over his pointed knees, covered with a species of thin woolen stuff worn threadbare, the two flaps of an old dressing-gown of printed calico in which the wadding took the liberty of issuing through several rents, but the weight of this wadding pulled down the flaps and discovered the close-fitting jacket of flannel, grown black with use. After having tightened with a conceited air the cord of this refractory dressing-gown so as to show his slender waist, Fraisier brought together with the tongs two sticks in the fireplace which had long been separated, like two brothers turned enemies. Then with a sudden thought he straightened himself up.

"Madame Sauvage," he cried.

"Well."

"I am not at home to anyone."

"Eh! *Parbleur*, we know that," replied the virago in a masterful voice.

"It is my old nurse," said the man of law with a confused air to the Cibot.

"She has still plenty of ugliness"—*laid*,—*lait*, milk,—replied the former heroine of the Halles.

Fraisier laughed at the pun, and shot the bolt of the door to make sure that his housekeeper should not come to interrupt the Cibot's confidences.

"Well, madame, explain to me your affair," said he, seating himself and still endeavoring to drape himself in his dressing-gown. "A person who is recommended to me by the only friend whom I have in the world can count on me—yes—absolutely!"

Madame Cibot talked during a half-hour without the man of law permitting himself the least interruption; he had the curious air of a young soldier who listens to "one of the old ones." This silence and the submission of Fraisier, the attention which he appeared to pay to this cascade of words, of which we have seen specimens in the scenes between the Cibot and poor Pons, caused the suspicious concierge to forget some of those forebodings which the sight of so many ignoble details had inspired in her. When the Cibot finally stopped and was waiting for advice, the little man of law, whose greenish eyes with black points had not ceased to study his future client, was taken with the kind of cough called "the graveyard," and he had recourse to an earthenware bowl half-full of some herb tea, which he emptied.

"Were it not for Poulain, I would be already dead," replied he to the maternal regards which the concierge bestowed upon him, "but he will give me back my health he says."

He seemed to have lost the memory of the confidences of his client, who began to think of leaving such a perishing counselor.

"Madame, in cases of inheritance, before going into them it is necessary to know two things,"

resumed the former attorney of Mantes, becoming grave. "In the first place, if the property is worth the trouble taken about it, and, secondly, who are the heirs; for if the inheritance is the booty, the heirs are the enemies."

The Cibot spoke of Rémonencq and Élie Magus, and said that the two shrewd accomplices estimated the collection of pictures at six hundred thousand francs.

"Will they take it at that price?"—demanded the former attorney of Mantes; "for, do you see madame, men of business do not believe in pictures. A picture, that is forty sous worth of canvas, or one hundred thousand francs of painting! Now, the paintings of that value are all well-known, and what errors are made in all these valuations, even those the most celebrated! A great financier, whose gallery was valued and greatly visited, and all engraved,—actually engraved!—was reputed to have expended millions upon it.—He died, for everybody dies; very well, his 'authentic' pictures did not produce more than two hundred thousand francs! It will be necessary to bring me these gentlemen. Let us go on to the heirs."

And Fraisier resumed his listening attitude. When he heard the name of the President Camusot he executed a shaking of the head accompanied by a grimace which made the Cibot excessively attentive; she endeavored to read this forehead, this atrocious physiognomy, and she found only an inscrutable expression.

"Yes, my dear monsieur," repeated the Cibot,

"my Monsieur Pons is the own cousin of the President Camusot de Marville, he goes over the relationship to me ten times a day. The first wife of M. Camusot, the silk merchant—"

"Who is going to be created peer of France—"

"Was a Demoiselle Pons, first-cousin of Monsieur Pons."

"They are cousins born of first-cousins."

"They are no longer anything to each other, they have quarrelled."

M. Camusot de Marville had been during five years President of the Tribunal of Mantes before coming to Paris. Not only did he leave there certain souvenirs, but he had also preserved relations thereby, for his successor, the judge with whom he had been most intimate during his sojourn there, presided still over the tribunal, and consequently knew Fraisier thoroughly.

"Do you know, madame," said he, when the Cibot had finally arrested the motion of the red sluice-gates of her torrential mouth, "do you know that you would have for a capital enemy a man who can send people to the gallows?"

The concierge sprang from her chair with a bound like that of the doll of that plaything called "a jack-in-the-box."

"Calm yourself, my dear lady," resumed Fraisier. "Nothing is more conceivable than that you should be ignorant of the power of the President of the Chamber of Indictments of the Cour Royale of Paris, but you should have known that Monsieur

Pons had a direct, legal heir. Monsieur le Président de Marville is the sole and only heir of your sick man, but he is collateral in the third degree; therefore, according to the law, Monsieur Pons can do what he will with his property. You are also ignorant of the fact that the daughter of Monsieur le Président was married, within the last six weeks at the least, to the eldest son of Monsieur le Comte Popinot, peer of France, formerly Minister of Agriculture and Commerce, one of the most influential men in modern political affairs. This alliance renders the president still more redoubtable than he is as sovereign of the Court of Assizes."

The Cibot shuddered again at these words.

"Yes, it is he who would send you there," resumed Fraisier. "Ah! my dear lady, you do not know what the red robe is! It is already quite enough to have the simple black robe against one! If you see me here, ruined, bald, almost dead,—very well! It is for having run against, without knowing it, a simple little provincial *Procureur-de-roi!* I was forced to sell my practice at the lowest price, and very happy to be able to decamp with the loss of all my fortune. If I had tried to resist, I would not have been able to retain my profession of attorney. A fact of which you are also ignorant is, that it is not only a question of the President Camusot, that would be nothing; but there is, do you see, a woman!—And if you should find yourself face to face with this woman you would tremble as if you were on the first step of the gallows, the hair

would stand on end. The president's wife is vindictive enough to spend ten years in enticing you into a trap in which you would perish! She uses her husband just as a child spins its top. She has in her life caused the suicide in the Conciergerie of a charming young man; she turned white as snow a count who found himself under an accusation of forgery. She almost caused the outlawry of one of the greatest seigneurs in the Court of Charles X. Finally she overthrew the Procureur-Général, Monsieur de Granville."

"Who lives Rue Vieille-du-Temple, at the corner of Rue Saint-François?" said the Cibot.

"The same man. It is said that she wishes to make her husband Minister of Justice, and I am not sure that she will not arrive at her object—If she took it into her head to send both of us to the Court of Assizes and to the galleys, I, who am as innocent as an unborn babe, I would take a passport and I would go to the United States,—so well do I know the law. Now, my dear Madame Cibot, to be able to marry her only daughter to the young Vicomte Popinot, who will be, they say, the heir of your proprietor, Monsieur Pillerault, the president's wife has stripped herself of all her fortune, so much so that at this moment the president and his wife are reduced to live on the salary of the presidency. And you believe, my dear lady, that in these circumstances, Madame la Présidente would neglect the inheritance of your Monsieur Pons?—Why, I would rather face the

mitrailleuses than know that I have such a woman against me.—"

"But," said the Cibot, "they have quarrelled.—"

"What does that matter?" said Fraisier. "The more reason! To kill a relation of whom you complain, that is something; but to inherit from him, that is a pleasure!"

"But the good man holds his heirs in horror; he repeated to me that these persons, I remember the names, Monsieur Cardot, Monsieur Berthier, etc., had crushed him like an egg under a tumbrel."

"Do you wish to be smashed also?"

"Mon Dieu! Mon Dieu!" cried the concierge.

"Ah! Mame Fontaine was right when she said that I should encounter obstacles; but she said that I would succeed."

"Listen, my dear Madame Cibot—That you may draw out of this affair some thirty thousand francs, that is possible; but as to the inheritance, it is not worth while to think about it.—We talked about you and your affair, Doctor Poulain and I, yesterday evening."

Here Madame Cibot again made a bound on her seat.

"What is the matter with you?"

"But if you were acquainted with my affair, why have you let me gabble here like a magpie?"

"Madame Cibot, I was acquainted with your affair, but I knew nothing at all of Madame Cibot! So many clients, so many characters.—"

Upon which Madame Cibot threw upon her future

counselor a singular glance, in which all her suspicions flamed out, and Fraisier intercepted the glance.

"I resume," said Fraisier. "Then, our friend Poulain has been brought by you into connection with the old Monsieur Pillerault, the great-uncle of Madame la Comtesse Popinot, and that is one of your claims to my devotion. Poulain goes to see your proprietor,—note this!—every two weeks, and he has learned all these details from him. This old merchant was present at the marriage of his great-great-nephew—for he is an uncle to inherit from, he has some fifteen thousand francs of income; and for the last twenty-five years he has lived like a monk; he expends scarcely one thousand crowns a year, and he has related all the affair of the marriage to Poulain. It appears that this row has been caused entirely by your good man, the musician, who wished to dishonor, out of revenge, the family of the president. It is always well to see both sides of the shield. Your sick man says he is innocent, but all the world regards him as a monster."

"It would not astonish me if he was one!" cried the Cibot. "Just imagine, here are ten years past in which I have given him of my best, he knows it, he has my savings, and he will not put me into his will.—No, monsieur, he will not, he is headstrong, he is a real mule—Here are ten days that I have spoken to him about it, the old villain does not budge any more than if he were a milestone. He

does not open his mouth, he looks at me in a way— All that he says is that he will recommend me to Monsieur Schmucke."

"He intends, then, to make a will in favor of this Schmucke?"

"He will give him everything."

"Listen, my dear Madame Cibot, it is necessary, in order that I may arrive at a definite opinion and be able to conceive a plan, that I should know Monsieur Schmucke, that I should see the objects which compose the property, that I should have a conference with this Jew of whom you spoke to me; and then, let me direct you."

"We will see, my good Monsieur Fraisier."

"How, we will see!" said Fraisier, darting a viperous glance at the Cibot and speaking in his natural voice. "Ah! now, am I, or am I not, your counsel? Let us thoroughly understand each other."

The Cibot felt herself discovered, she had a chill in her back.

"You have all my confidence," she returned, seeing herself at the mercy of a tiger.

"We attorneys are accustomed to being betrayed by our clients. Let us examine well your position; it is admirable. If you follow my counsels step by step you will have, I guarantee to you, from thirty to forty thousand francs of this inheritance.— But this fine medal has a reverse. Suppose the president's wife learns that the property of Monsieur Pons is worth a million, and that you wish to get something out of it, for there are always some

people who would take upon themselves to repeat these things!"—said he in a parenthesis.

This parenthesis, opened and closed by two pauses, made the Cibot shiver. It occurred to her immediately that Fraisier would charge himself with this denunciation.

"My dear client, in ten minutes they would obtain from the good man Pillerault your dismissal from the lodge, and you would be given two hours in which to move out.—"

"What difference would that make to me," said the Cibot, rising on her feet like a Bellona, "I would remain in the household of these gentlemen as their confidential housekeeper."

"And, seeing that, they would fix up a trap for you, and you would wake up one fine morning in a jail, you and your husband, under a capital accusation."

"I!" cried the Cibot. "I, who have never had not one centime of another's!—I! I!—"

She talked during the next five minutes, and Fraisier examined this great artist executing her concerto of self-praises. He was cold, mocking, his eye pierced the Cibot like a needle, he laughed inwardly, his dry wig moved of itself. It was Robespierre at the period when this French Sylla wrote quatrains.

"And how, and why, and under what pretext!" demanded she, finishing.

"Do you want to know how you could be guillotined?"

The Cibot became as pale as death, for this phrase fell on her neck like the axe of the law. She looked at Fraisier with a bewildered air.

"Listen to me well, my dear," resumed Fraisier in suppressing a movement of satisfaction which the fright of his client caused him.

"I would rather leave everything there," murmured the Cibot.

And she wished to rise.

"Sit still, for you should see your own danger, I owe you my explanation," said Fraisier imperiously. "You are sent away by Monsieur Pillerault, no doubt about that, is there? You become the servant of these two gentlemen, very well! It is a declaration of war between the president's wife and you. You wish to do everything in order to get hold of this property, to get from it leg or wing.—"

The Cibot made a gesture.

"I do not blame you, it is not my rôle," said Fraisier, in returning the gesture of his client. "It is a battle, this enterprise, and you would go further than you think with it! One becomes drunk with one's ideas, one strikes hard—"

Another gesture of denial on the part of Madame Cibot who drew herself up.

"Come—come—my little mother," resumed Fraisier, with horrible familiarity, "you will go pretty far—"

"Do you take me for a thief?"

"Come, madame, you have a receipt from Monsieur Schmucke which has cost you very little.

Ah, you are here to confess, my beautiful lady.—Do not undertake to deceive your confessor, especially when that confessor has the power to read in your heart.—"

The Cibot was terrified at the perspicacity of this man, and now understood the reason of the close attention with which he had listened to her.

"Very well," resumed Fraisier, "you can well believe that the president's wife would not let herself be beaten by you in this race for the inheritance.—You would be suspected, you would be watched.—You succeed in getting yourself mentioned in the will of Monsieur Pons—That is perfect. One fine morning, justice arrives, they seize the sick man's drink, they find arsenic at the bottom; you and your husband are arrested, tried, condemned, as having wished to kill the Sieur Pons in order to get your legacy.—I defended once, at Versailles, a poor woman, as really innocent as you would be in this case; things were as I say to you, and all that I was able to do in her case was to save her life. The unhappy woman was sentenced to twenty years of hard labor, and she is now serving them out at Saint-Lazare."

Madame Cibot's terror was at its height. More and more pale, she looked at this little dried-up man with greenish eyes as the poor Moor accused of being faithful to his religion might regard the Inquisitor at the moment when he hears himself condemned to the stake.

"You say then, my dear Monsieur Fraisier, that

in letting you act, in confiding to you the care of my interests, I will have something, without anything to fear?"

"I guarantee to you thirty thousand francs," said Fraisier, like a man sure of his facts.

"Now, you know how much I love the dear Doctor Poulain," she resumed, in her most wheedling voice, "it was he who told me to come here and see you, and the worthy man did not send me here to be told that I would be guillotined like a poisoner.—"

She melted into tears, so much had this idea of the guillotine made her shudder, her nerves were shaken, her heart was contracted with terror, she lost her head. Fraisier enjoyed his triumph. In perceiving the hesitation of his client he had seen himself deprived of the affair, and he had wished to master the Cibot, to frighten her, to stupefy her, to have her in his power, hands and feet tied. The concierge, who had come into this office as the fly throws himself into the spider's web, should rest there, netted, entangled, as provender, for the ambition of this little man of law. Fraisier wished, in fact, to find in this affair subsistence for his old days, ease, happiness and consideration. The day before, during the evening, everything had been duly weighed, carefully examined as with a magnifying glass by Doctor Poulain and himself. The doctor had described Schmucke to his friend Fraisier, and their shrewd minds had sounded the depths of all these hypotheses, examined all the resources

and all the dangers. Fraisier in an outburst of enthusiasm had cried: "Our fortune, for both of us, is in this," and he had promised Poulain the position of physician-in-chief of a hospital in Paris, and he promised himself to be *juge-de-paix* of the arrondissement.

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To be Judge of the Peace! That was for this man of capacity, Doctor-at-law and barefooted, a vision so high and so desirable that he thought of it as a deputy-advocate thinks of the judge's gown, and the Italian priests of the Papal tiara. The thought seemed folly! The *juge-de-paix*, Monsieur Vitel, before whom Fraisier pleaded, was an old man of sixty-nine years of age, in sufficiently-bad health to talk of retiring, and Fraisier spoke of being his successor, to Poulain, as Poulain spoke to him of the beautiful heiress whom he would marry after having saved her life. No one knows what covetousnesses are inspired by the various official stations in Paris. To live in Paris is the universal desire. If an official establishment for the sale of tobacco, or of stamps, becomes vacant, one hundred women rise up like one man and ask all their friends to work to obtain it for them. The probable vacancy of one of the twenty-four collectorships in Paris causes an outbreak of ambitions in the Chamber of Deputies! These prizes are given in full council, the nomination is an affair of state. The appointments of a *juge-de-paix* at Paris are about six thousand francs. The keeper of records in this tribunal is an office which is worth one hundred thousand francs. It is one of the places the most envied in the whole judicial order. Fraisier, Judge of the Peace, friend

of a physician-in-chief of a hospital, would marry richly, and would marry the Doctor Poulain, they would materially help each other. The night had passed its leaden roller over all the plans of the former advocate of Mantes, and a formidable plan had been conceived, an intricate plan, fertile in harvests and in intrigues. Madame Cibot was the peg on which this plan was to turn. Thus the revolt of this instrument had to be stopped; it had not been foreseen, but the advocate had beaten to his feet the audacious concierge in displaying all the forces of his venomous nature.

"My dear Madame Cibot, see now, reassure yourself," said he, taking her hand.

This hand, cold as the skin of a snake, produced a terrible impression on the concierge. There resulted from it something like a physical reaction which put an end to her emotion; the toad Astaroth of Madame Fontaine seemed to her less dangerous to touch than this poison bag covered with a reddish wig and who spoke with a voice like the creaking of a door.

"Do not believe that I frightened you wrongly," resumed Fraisier, after having noted this new movement of repulsion on the part of the Cibot. "The affairs which make the terrible reputation of Madame la Présidente are so well known at the Palais that you can consult over there anyone you wish to. The great lord whom she almost caused to be outlawed is the Marquis d'Espard. The Marquis d'Esgrignon is the one who was saved from the

galleys. The young man, rich, handsome, full of promise of the future, who was going to marry a demoiselle belonging to one of the first families of France and who hung himself in one of the dungeons of the Conciergerie was the celebrated Lucien de Rubempré, whose affair stirred up all Paris at the time. There was a question here of an inheritance, that of a kept woman, the famous Esther, who left several millions and this young man was accused of having poisoned her, because he was the heir named in the will. This young poet was not in Paris when the woman died, he did not know that he was her heir.—It is impossible to be more innocent than that. Very well, after having been interrogated, by Monsieur Camusot, this young man hung himself in his dungeon.—Justice is like medicine, it has its victims. In the first case, one dies for society; in the second one, it is for science," said he, permitting himself a fearful smile. "Very well, you see that I know the dangers.—I am already ruined by the law, I, poor little obscure advocate. My experience has cost me dear, it is entirely at your service."

"By my faith! No, thank you," said the Cibot. "I give up everything. I would have been ungrateful.—I only wish what is due me! I have had thirty years of honesty, monsieur. But Monsieur Pons said that he would recommend me in his will to his friend Schmucke; very well, I will finish my days in peace in the house of that good German—"

Fraisier had overstepped his mark, he had discouraged the Cibot and was obliged to efface the terrifying impression which she had received.

"Do not despair of anything," he said. "You can go home tranquilly. Come, we will conduct the affair to a good result."

"But what is it that I should do, my good Monsieur Fraisier, in order to have an income and—?"

"And not have any remorse," said he, quickly cutting her speech in two. "Ah, it is precisely for this reason that lawyers were invented; you cannot have anything in these cases without keeping yourself within the law.—You are not acquainted with the laws—I know them.—With me, you will be on the side of legality; you will possess, in peace with all men; as for the conscience, that is your affair."

"Very well. Tell me," resumed the Cibot, whom these words rendered curious and happy.

"I do not know, I have not studied the affair in all its bearings. I have occupied myself only with the obstacles. At first, it is necessary, you see, to get the will, and you will not go astray; but above all, let us know in whose favor Monsieur Pons will dispose of his fortune, for if you should be his heir—"

"No, no, he does not love me! Ah! if I had known the value of his bibelots, and if I had known that which he said to me of his love affairs, I would be without uneasiness to-day."

"Well," resumed Fraisier, "go ahead all the time!

Dying men have singular fancies, my dear Madame Cibot, they disappoint a great many hopes. Let him make his will, and we will see afterwards. But before all, the question is to have valued, the objects which are included in his property. So, put me in communication with the Jew, with that Rémonencq, they will be very useful to us.—Have all confidence in me, I am entirely at your service. I am the friend of my client, to hang or to take down when he is mine. Friends or enemies, that is my nature."

"Very well, I am entirely with you," said the Cibot, "and as to fees, Monsieur Poulain—"

"Do not speak of that," said Fraisier. "Endeavor to keep Poulain at the bedside of the sick man. The doctor has one of the most honest hearts, the purest that I know, and it is necessary for us to have there at your side a man on whom we can depend—. Poulain is worth more than I, I have become wicked."

"Well, you look like it," said the Cibot; "but I will trust to you."

"And you will be right," said he. "Come and see me when anything turns up, and go.—You are a clever woman, everything will go well."

"Adieu, my dear Monsieur Fraisier; good health to you—Your servant."

Fraisier reconducted his client to the door and, there, as she had done the previous night with the doctor, he said to her his last words.

"If you can persuade Monsieur Pons to call me in, that would be a great step gained."

"I will try," replied the Cibot.

"My good woman," replied Fraisier, causing the Cibot to re-enter his office, "I am well acquainted with Monsieur Trognon, notary, he is the notary of the quarter. If Monsieur Pons has not one already, speak to him of that one,—make him take him.—"

"I understand," replied the Cibot.

As she retired the concierge heard the rustling of a gown and the sound of a heavy step which wished to make itself light. Once more alone and in the street, the Cibot, after having walked a certain length of time, recovered her freedom of spirit. Although she remained under the influence of this conference and though she had always a great fear of the scaffold, of the law, of the judges, she made a very natural resolution, and one which would set her in silent conflict with her terrible counselor.

"And do I need," said she, "to get me associates? Let me further my own interest, and after that I will take all that they offer me to serve their interests."

This resolution would naturally hasten, as we shall see, the end of the unfortunate musician.

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"Well, my dear Monsieur Schmucke," said the Cibot, entering the apartment, "how is our dearly-adored sick man."

"Nod vell," replied the German. "Bons drashed arount all the nighd."

"What did he say then?"

"Voolishness! dat he vished dat I got his vordune on gondission dat nuttings is zold,—and he gried! Poor man! Eet has proken my hard."

"That will all pass away, my dear lamb," replied the concierge. "I have made you wait for your breakfast, as it is now after nine o'clock; but do not scold me. Do you see, I have had so many affairs to attend to—on your account. You see that we havn't nothing left. I have got some money!"

"Ant how," said the pianist.

"Why, my uncle!"

"Vat ungle?"

"Up the spout!"

"Te Zbout?"

"Oh, you dear man! Is he not simple! Oh, you are a saint, a love, an archbishop, an innocent who can be stuffed with straw, as the old actor said. How! you have been in Paris for the last twenty-nine years, you have seen, what,—the Revolution of July, and yet don't know what a pawnbroker is —the commissioner who lends you money on your

goods!—I have taken him all our silver dishes, eight of them, with bead edges. The Cibot can eat out of Algiers metal, that is plenty well enough, as they say. And it is not worth the while to speak of that to our cherub, that will stir him up and make him yellow, and he is irritable enough as it is. Let us save him before everything else, and we will see to other things afterwards. Ah, well! at the time, follow the fashion. When at war, do as at war, isn't that so?"

"Good vooman, suplime hard!" said the poor musician, taking the hand of the Cibot and putting it on his heart, with a tender expression.

The angel lifted her eyes to heaven and showed them full of tears.

"Come, finish now, papa Schmucke! you are absurd. Is not that a little too strong? I am only an old girl of the people, I carry my heart on my sleeve. Yes, I have something here, do you see," she cried, striking her breast, "as well as you both, though you have hearts of gold.—"

"Baba Schmucke?" replied the musician, "No, to zuffer zuch crief, to veep dears of plood, to bray to Heaven zo much, eet ees too much for me! I can nefer zurfife Bons."

"Parbleu! I believe you. You will kill yourself —Listen my love—"

"Lov!"

"Well, yes, my little son—"

"Zon?"

"My little duck, then, if you like that better."

"I toan'd know qvite vat you zay."

"Well, well, you let me take care of you and tell you what to do, or if you continue on this way, do you see, I will have two sick men on my hands—According to my stupid ideas, we have got to divide the nursing between us here. You cannot go on giving lessons in Paris for that wears you out and you are no longer good for anything here, where you will have to sit up nights, for Monsieur Pons is going to be more and more sick. I am going to go to-day to call round on all your pupils and tell them you are ill—ain't I? Then you will be able to sit up at nights with our dear lamb, and you can sleep in the morning from five o'clock up to, suppose, two o'clock in the afternoon. I'll do the hardest nursing, that is in the day time, because it will be necessary to get your breakfast for you and your dinner and to take care of the sick one, to get him up, to change his bed, to give him his medicine.—For to go on as I am doing now I couldn't stand it ten days longer, nohow. And here's already thirty days that we have been keeping this thing up. And what will become of you both if I should fall sick?—And you, yourself, it is enough to make one shiver to see in what a state you are after having watched over monsieur just last night.—"

She led Schmucke up to a mirror, and Schmucke saw that he was very much changed.

"So, if you will be guided by me, I will get you your breakfast right off. Then you can watch our sick love till two o'clock. Then if you will give

me the list of your pupils, I will soon have seen them all and you will then be at liberty for a couple of weeks. You shall go to bed as soon as ever I get back and you shall sleep till the evening."

This proposition was so sensible that Schmucke agreed to it at once.

"*Mum* with Monsieur Pons; for you know he would think himself done for if we should tell him like that that he must give up the theatre and his lessons. The poor monsieur would imagine that he would never get back his scholars—or some such nonsense—Monsieur Poulain said that we can only save our dear Benjamin by leaving his mind as easy as possible."

"Vell, vell—make te prekfest ant I vill make a lizt ant gif you te attresses—you are righd, I gom· prehend."

An hour later the Cibot, in her Sunday best, departed in great state, to the great amazement of Rémonencq, promising herself to represent, in a suitable manner, the confidential housekeeper of the two Nut-crackers in all the boarding-schools and to all the private pupils of the two musicians.

It is unnecessary to repeat the divers discourses, executed like the variations of a theme, into which the Cibot launched in presence of the mistresses of the boarding-schools and in the bosom of families; it will suffice to depict the scene which took place in the official cabinet of The Illustrious Gaudissart, into which the concierge penetrated, not without meeting unheard-of difficulties. The directors of

Parisian theatres are better guarded than kings and their ministers. The reason for the strong barriers which they erect between themselves and other mortals is easy to comprehend,--kings have only to defend themselves against ambitions; the directors of theatres have to fear the self-love of artists and of authors.

The Cibot, however, overcame all obstacles by the prompt intimacy which she established between herself and the concierge. These porters have a common ground of recognition, like all the people of the same profession. Each occupation has its shibboleth, as it has its misfortunes and its scars.

"Ah, madame, you are the door-keeper of a theatre," the Cibot had begun. "I am only a poor concierge of a house in the Rue de Normandie where Monsieur Pons lives, your orchestra leader. Oh! how happy I would be if I had your place and could see passing all the time the actors, and the dancers and the authors! That must be, as the old actor said, the marshal's baton of our trade."

"And how is he, that good Monsieur Pons?" asked the other.

"Why he is not well at all; here it is two months that he has not been out of his bed and he will only quit the house feet foremost, that is sure."

"That will be a great loss—"

"Yes. I have come from him to explain his position to your director; can't you manage then, my dear, to let me see him?—"

"A lady from Monsieur Pons!"

It was thus that the valet of the theatre attached to the director's cabinet announced Madame Cibot, having received his cue from the concierge of the theatre. Gaudissart had just arrived for a rehearsal. Chance arranged it so that no one was waiting to speak to him, that the authors of the play and the actors were all late; he was delighted to have news from his orchestra leader, he made a Napoleonic gesture, and the Cibot entered.

This former commercial traveler, now at the head of a popular theatre, imposed upon his joint-stock company, regarding it much as a man regards a legitimate wife. Thus he had arrived at a financial development which re-acted upon his own person. Grown fat and large, rosy with good living and prosperity, Gaudissart had frankly come out as a Mondor.

"We are aiming for Beaujon!" he would say, hoping to be the first to make a joke at his own expense.

"You are yet only as far as Turcaret," retorted Bixiou, who supplanted him sufficiently often in the smiles of the first dancer of the theatre, the celebrated Héloïse Brisetout.

In fact, the ex-Illustrious Gaudissart exploited his theatre solely, determinedly and doggedly in his own interests. After having got himself admitted as collaborateur in various ballets, comedies and vaudevilles, he had bought out the other half, profiting by the necessities in which the authors find themselves.

These pieces, these vaudevilles, always added to the successful dramas, brought to Gaudissart several pieces of gold every day. He traded by proxy on the sale of the tickets and he claimed for himself as *feux*, or perquisites, of the director a certain number which insured him a tithe of the receipts. These three sources of managerial revenue, in addition to the letting of boxes and the presents received from indifferent actresses who wanted to fill the minor parts and who wanted to show themselves as pages, as queens, ran up the total of his third of the profits so well that the stockholders, to whom the other two-thirds belonged, practically received little more than a tenth of the actual receipts. Nevertheless, this tenth produced an interest of 15 per cent on the stock. Consequently, Gaudissart, backed by the support of these 15 per cent dividends, was accustomed to speak of his intelligence, of his probity, of his zeal, and of the great good fortune of his stockholders. When Comte Popinot, with a pretense of interest, asked Monsieur Matifat, Général Gouraud, Matifat's son-in-law, or Crevel, if they were satisfied with Gaudissart, Gouraud, lately made peer of France, replied:

"They say that he cheats us—but he is so clever, such a good fellow, that we are satisfied—"

"Then it is like the old fable of La Fontaine," said the former minister, smiling.

Gaudissart employed his capital in business affairs outside the theatre. He had so well taken the measure of the Graffs, the Schwabs and the

Brunners that he invested in the railways which their bank had launched. Concealing his shrewdness beneath the roundness and the careless ease of a libertine, of a voluptuary, he had the air of being concerned only with his pleasures and with his toilet; but he, in fact, thought of everything, and put to use the immense experience of affairs which he had acquired as a commercial traveler. This parvenu, who never took himself seriously, lived in a luxurious apartment decorated by an upholsterer, and in which he gave little suppers and fêtes to celebrated people. Ostentatious, liking to do things handsomely, he affected the airs of an easy, accommodating man and he seemed all the less dangerous that he had retained the "*platine*," or glibness, to use his own expression, of his former calling, to which he added the slang of the green-room. Now, as in the theatres the actors say things very bluntly, he was able to borrow enough wit behind the scenes, to give him, when added to the lively jokes of the commercial traveler, the air of a superior man. At the present moment he was thinking of selling his theatrical license and "passing" to use his own language, "to other labors." He wished to be the president of a railroad, to become a solid man, an administrator, and to marry the daughter of one of the richest Mayors of Paris, Mlle. Minard. He hoped to be elected deputy on his "line" and to rise under the protection of Popinot to the Council of State.

*

"To whom have I the honor of speaking?" said Gaudissart, directing upon Madame Cibot his managerial glance.

"I am, monsieur, the confidential housekeeper of Monsieur Pons."

"Ah, indeed! and how is he, the dear fellow?"

"Ill—very ill, monsieur."

"The devil—the devil!—I am sorry for it—I will go and see him, for he is one of those rare men—"

"Ah! yes, monsieur, a real cherub.—I sometimes ask myself how such a man can ever belong to a theatre company.—"

"But, madame, the theatre is a place for the improvement of morals," said Gaudissart. "Poor Pons!—My word of honor, it takes good seed to produce that sort—he is a model man, and such a talent! When do you think he can get back to his post? For the theatre, unfortunately, is like the diligences, which start at the hour, full or empty. The curtain goes up here every day at six o'clock and we may be as sorry as we like, but that won't lead the music. Come, how is he, really?"

"Alas, my good monsieur," said the Cibot, pulling out her handkerchief and putting it to her eyes, "it is very terrible to have to say it, but I fear that we are going to have the misfortune of losing him, although we take care of him like the apple of our

eyes—, Monsieur Schmucke and myself; and I have even come to tell you that you must not count any more on this worthy Monsieur Schmucke, who has got to sit up every night. We can't help doing as if there was still some hope, and trying to pull the dear, good man from the jaws of death. The doctor has no longer any hope.—"

"What is he dying of?"

"Of grief, of the jaundice, of the liver, and all that complicated with family affairs."

"And of a doctor," said Gaudissart. "He should have employed Dr. Lebrun, our physician. That would have cost him nothing."

"Monsieur has one which is like the good God—, but what can a doctor do, notwithstanding all his skill, against so many causes?"

"I have great need of those two brave Nut-crackers for the music for my new fairy-piece.—"

"Is it anything that I can do for them?"—said the Cibot, with an air worthy of Jocrisse.

Gaudissart burst out laughing.

"Monsieur, I am the confidential housekeeper, and there are many things that those gentlemen—"

At Gaudissart's peals of laughter a woman's voice cried out:

"If you are laughing, one can come in, old fellow."

And the first person of the dance made an irruption into the cabinet and threw herself upon the only sofa that was in it. This was Héloïse Brisetout, wrapped in a magnificent scarf called Algerine—

"What are you laughing at?—Is it at madame? What place does she want?"—said the dancer, throwing him one of those intelligent glances from artist to artist which should be made the subject of a picture.

Héloïse, a highly literary young woman, of much renown in Bohemia, intimate with the great artists, elegant, delicate and graceful, had very much more wit than have ordinarily the leading ballet dancers. In putting her questions she inhaled the pungent perfume of a vinaigrette.

"Madame, all women are equal when they are handsome, and if I don't sniff at the pestilence from a bottle, and if I don't plaster a lot of brick dust on my cheeks—"

"On top of that which Nature has already put there, that would make a fine redundancy, my child!" said Héloïse, winking at her director.

"I am an honest woman."

"So much the worse for you," said Héloïse. "It isn't so devilishly bad to be well kept if you wish! And I am, madame, and swaggeringly well, too!"

"How! So much the worse? It is very fine for you to have Algerine scarfs around your body and to give yourself airs," said the Cibot, "but you have never had half the declarations that I have received, *Médème!* And you will never be worth the beautiful oyster-girl of the Cadran Bleu."

The dancer jumped up suddenly, presented arms and brought the back of her right hand to her forehead, like a soldier saluting his general.

"What," cried Gaudissart, "you were that lovely oyster-girl of whom my father used to talk?"

"Madame doesn't know then either the cachucha or the polka? Madame must be over fifty years old," said Héloïse.

The dancer struck a dramatic attitude and declaimed the line:

"*Let us be friends, Cinna!*—"

"Come, Héloïse, madame is not clever—let her alone."

"Madame is then 'La Nouvelle Héloïse'?"—said the concierge, with a mock simplicity that was full of satire.

"Not bad, my old woman!" cried Gaudissart.

"That is pretty old," returned the dancer. "The joke is bald-headed; find another one, old lady,—or take a cigarette."

"Excuse me, madame," said the Cibot, "I am too sad to keep on answering you; I have my two gentlemen very sick, and I have pawned, to keep them and to preserve them from troubles, everything, even to my husband's coats, this morning. Here, you may see the tickets.—"

"Oh! here the farce turns to a drama!" cried the beautiful Héloïse. "What's the matter?"

"Madame falls in here," said the Cibot, "like—"

"Like the leading fairy," said Héloïse. "I will prompt you, go on, *Médème*!"

"Come—I am busy," said Gaudissart. "No more farces, no more nonsense! Héloïse, madame is the confidential woman of our poor leader of the

orchestra, who is dying; she has come to tell me not to depend on him any longer; I am in an awkward situation."

"Ah! the poor man! but we must give him a benefit."

"That would ruin him!" said Gaudissart. "He would have to give the next day five hundred francs to the hospitals, who never believe that there are any other unfortunates in Paris excepting their own. No, look here my good woman, since you are evidently running for the *prix Montyon*—"

Gaudissart rang a bell and the valet of the theatre suddenly presented himself.

"Tell the cashier to send me a note of a thousand francs. Sit down, madame."

"Ah, poor woman—see how she cries!—" said the dancer, "isn't it dismal? Come, my mother, we will all go see him, cheer up—See here, old fellow," said she to the director, drawing him into a corner, "you want to make me play the first rôle in the ballet of 'Ariadne.' You are going to marry, and you know how unhappy I can make you?—"

"Héloïse, I have a heart copper-bottomed, like a frigate."

"I will show some of your children!—I will borrow some."

"I have openly declared our attachment."

"Be a good fellow, give Pons's place to Garangeot; that poor lad has talent, but he hasn't a sou; I will promise you to keep the peace."

"But wait till Pons is dead;—the good man may come back again."

"Oh! as for that—No, monsieur—" said the Cibot. "Since last evening he has no longer his senses—he is delirious. It will be, unluckily, soon enough finished."

"You put in Garangeot for the interim," said Héloïse. "He has all the Press on his side—"

At this moment the cashier entered, holding in his hand a note of a thousand francs.

"Give that to madame," said Gaudissart, "Adieu, my good woman; take good care of that dear man, and say to him that I will come to see him to-morrow or the day after—, as soon as I can."

"A man overboard!" said Héloïse.

"Ah! monsieur, hearts like yours are only found in a theatre. May God bless you!"

"To what account am I to charge this?" asked the cashier.

"I will sign the receipt. You will charge it to the gratuity account."

Before leaving, the Cibot made an elaborate courtesy to the ballet-dancer, and overheard this question, which Gaudissart put to his former mistress:

"Is Garangeot capable of getting up the music for our ballet of the 'Mohicans' in twelve days? If he can pull me out of this affair, he shall have Pons's place!"

The concierge, better paid for having caused so much harm than if she had done a good action,

THE CIBOT, THE ILLUSTRIOUS GAUDISSART AND HELOISE BRISETOUT

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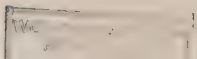

suppressed all the revenues of the two friends and deprived them of their means of existence, in the event of Pons recovering his health. This perfidy was calculated to bring about in a few days the result desired by her, the necessity of selling the pictures coveted by Élie Magus. To contrive this first spoliation, the Cibot would have to lull the suspicions of the terrible associate she had taken, the attorney Fraisier, and also to make sure of the entire discretion of Élie Magus and of Rémonencq.

*

As to the Auvergnat, he had been brought by degrees under the dominion of one of those passions which are conceived by the uneducated, who come to Paris from the depths of the provinces with fixed ideas born of the isolation of country life, with the ignorance of primitive natures and the brutality of their desires, which are converted into fixed ideas. The virile beauty of Madame Cibot, her vivacity and her fish-woman's wit, had long attracted the second-hand dealer, who wished to carry her off from Cibot and make her his concubine, a species of bigamy much more common among the lower classes in Paris than is supposed. But avarice is a running noose which tightens more and more around the heart, and ends by stifling the reason. Thus Rémonencq, when he valued at forty thousand francs the payment to her from Élie Magus and himself, passed from unlawful intentions to crime, and wished to have the Cibot for his legitimate wife. This love, purely speculative, brought him, in his long dreams of the smoker, leaning against the door of his shop, to wish for the death of the little tailor. He saw his capital thus nearly tripled, he thought what an excellent saleswoman the Cibot would make, what a fine figure she would cut in a magnificent shop on the Boulevard. This double covetousness intoxicated Rémonencq. He would

hire a shop on the Boulevard de la Madeleine, he would fill it with the choicest curiosities from the collection of the defunct Pons. After sleeping on cloth of gold and having seen millions in the blue spirals of his pipe, he would wake up, face to face with the little tailor, who was sweeping the court, the door way and the street, when the Auvergnat was opening the front of the shop and displaying his wares; for since the illness of Pons, Cibot had taken the place of his wife in her household affairs. The Auvergnat, then, had come to consider this little, stunted, copper-colored tailor as the sole obstacle to his happiness, and he asked himself how he could get rid of him. This constantly growing passion rendered Madame Cibot very proud, for she had attained the age at which women commence to understand that they are growing old.

One morning when the Cibot, after getting up, looked at Rémonencq with a reflective air as he was arranging the odds and ends of his wares, she resolved to find out to what lengths his love would carry him.

"Well," said the Auvergnat coming to her, "Are things going as you wish?".

"It is you I am troubled about," replied the Cibot. "You compromise me," she added, "the neighbors will end by seeing you making sheep's eyes at me."

She left the door and went into the depths of the Auvergnat's shop.

"Well, that's an idea," said Rémonencq.

"Come here, till I speak to you," said the Cibot.

"The heirs of Monsieur Pons are bestirring themselves and they are capable of giving us a great deal of trouble. God knows what will happen to us if they send lawyers to stick their noses into everything, like hunting-dogs. I can't persuade Monsieur Schmucke to sell some pictures unless you love me enough to keep the secret—Oh! but a secret, so that with your head on the block you would say nothing—neither from where the pictures came, nor who sold them.

"You understand, Monsieur Pons once dead and buried, if they find fifty-three pictures instead of sixty-seven, no one will be the wiser! Besides, if Monsieur Pons had sold them while he was living, no one would have anything to say."

"Yes," replied Rémonencq, "it is all the same to me;—but Monsieur Élie Magus wants his receipts all regular."

"You shall have your receipts good enough, bless you! Do you think it is I who is going to write them?—That will be Monsieur Schmucke! But you must say to your Jew," she added, "that he is to be as silent as you are."

"We will be as dumb as the fishes. That is in our line. I know how to read, but I don't know how to write, that is why I have use for a woman, clever and educated like you!—I, who have never thought of anything but laying aside something for my old days, want some little Rémonencqs. Come, you leave your Cibot!"

"Here comes your Jew," said the concierge. "We can arrange matters."

"Well, my good lady," said Élie Magus, who came every third day very early in the morning to know when he could purchase his pictures, "Where are we now?"

"Haven't you seen anyone who has come to speak to you of Monsieur Pons and his bibelots" demanded the Cibot.

"I have received," replied Élie Magus, "a letter from a lawyer; but as he is a fellow who appears to me to be one of those little busy-bodies looking for jobs, and I am suspicious of that kind, I didn't answer him. At the end of three days he came to see me and left his card; I told my concierge that I was always out when he came."

"You are a love of a Jew," said the Cibot, who was unaware of Élie Magus's prudence. "Very well, my sons, in a few days from now I will bring to you Monsieur Schmucke to sell you seven or eight pictures, ten at the most; but on two conditions. The first is absolute secrecy. It is to be Monsieur Schmucke who has sent for you, mind that, monsieur. It is to be Monsieur Rémonencq who proposed you to Monsieur Schmucke for purchaser. In fact, whatever happens, I am to have nothing to do with it. You will give forty-six thousand francs for the four pictures?"

"Agreed," replied the Jew, with a sigh.

"Very good," resumed the concierge. "The second condition is that you shall give to me

forty-three thousand francs, and that you shall buy them for no more than three thousand from Monsieur Schmucke; Rémonencq will buy four of them for two thousand francs and pay me the surplus—But now, do you see, my dear Monsieur Magus, after all, that I have thrown a mighty good thing in your way—yours and Rémonencq's—on condition of sharing the profits between us three. I will take you to that lawyer's, or that lawyer can come here, without doubt. You will estimate all that there is of Monsieur Pons's at the price that you are willing to pay for it in order that Monsieur Fraisier may know the exact value of the property. Only, he must not come before our sale, you understand that?—"

"That is understood," said the Jew, "but it will take some time to see the things and to fix the price."

"You shall have a half-day. Come, that is my affair.—Talk that over between you, my children, so that day after to-morrow the thing shall be done. I am going to see that Fraisier and to talk to him, for he knows what is going on here through Doctor Poulain, and it will be a mighty hard thing to do to keep him quiet, that rascal there!"

Half way between the Rue de Normandie and the Rue de la Perle, the Cibot met Fraisier, who was coming to her house, so impatient was he to get at what he called the "elements" of the affair.

"Aha! I was going to see you," she said.

Fraisier complained of not having been received by Élie Magus; but the concierge extinguished the

gleam of suspicion which sparkled in the eyes of the man of law by assuring him that Magus had just returned from a journey and that not later than the day but one following she would procure an interview with him in the apartment of Pons to fix the value of the collection.

"Deal frankly with me," replied Fraisier. "It is more than probable that I shall be employed by the heirs of Monsieur Pons. In that position I shall be even better able to serve you."

This was said so decisively that the Cibot trembled. This starveling man of law was evidently manœuvering on his side as she was manœuvering on hers; she resolved, therefore, to hasten the sale of the pictures. She was not wrong in her conjectures. The lawyer and the doctor had between them gone to the expense of an entirely new suit of clothes for Fraisier, so that he might be able to present himself, decently apparelled, before Madame la Présidente Camusot de Marville. The time required to make the suit was the sole reason for the postponement of this interview, on which depended the fate of the two friends. After his visit to Madame Cibot, Fraisier proposed to go and try on his new coat, waistcoat and pantaloons. He found those habiliments finished and ready for use. He returned to his own house, put on a new wig and departed in a hired cabriolet, at ten o'clock in the morning for the Rue de Hanovre, were he hoped to obtain an audience with the president's wife. Fraisier, in a white cravat, yellow gloves, a new

wig, perfumed with Eau-de-Portugal, resembled those poisons which are put up in crystal bottles, the stoppers held down by white kid, whose labels and whole appearance, even to the thread around the kid, are coquettish, and which nevertheless only appear all the more dangerous. His peremptory manner, his blotched face, his cutaneous malady, his green eyes, his general savor of wickedness, caught the eye like white clouds on a blue sky. In his study, as he showed himself to Madame Cibot, he was but the vulgar knife with which an assassin commits a crime; but at the door of Madame de Marville he was the elegant poniard which a young woman hides in her little bodice.

*

A great change had taken place in the Rue de Hanovre. The Vicomte and the Vicomtesse Popinot, the former minister and his wife, had been unwilling that the president and his wife should remove into hired apartments and leave the house which they had given up to their daughter as part of her dot. The president and his wife had accordingly transferred their establishment to the second floor, now left vacant by the removal of the old lady, its late tenant, who had wished to end her days in the country. Madame Camusot, who retained Madeleine Vivet, her cook, and her footman, had recovered from the embarrassment of this change, an embarrassment somewhat lessened by an apartment of four thousand francs without rent and by an income of ten thousand francs. This *aurea mediocritas* already seemed insufficient to Madame de Marville, who wished a fortune to match her ambition; but the cession of all their property to their daughter had entailed the loss of the president's vested right of election. Now, Amélie de Marville was determined to make a deputy of her husband, for she did not easily renounce her plans, and she did not despair of obtaining the election of the president from the arrondissement in which Marville is situated. For the last two months she had been, therefore, tormenting the Baron Camusot

—for the newly created peer of France had obtained the dignity of baron to get him to advance her one hundred thousand francs on her husband's inheritance for the purpose, she said, of buying a small domain enclosed in that of Marville and which brought in a net rental of about two thousand francs. She and her husband would be there on their own property, and near to their children; the estate of Marville would thereby be duly rounded, and augmented by so much. The president's wife expatiated to her father-in-law upon the deprivation to which she had been constrained in order to marry her daughter with the Vicomte Popinot, and she asked the old man if he wished to close to his eldest son the road to the supreme honors of the magistracy, which were no longer granted but to powerful parliamentary positions, a position her husband would know how to obtain, and to make himself feared by the ministry.

"Those gentry grant nothing excepting to those who twist their cravats around their necks till they stick out their tongues," she said. "They are all ungrateful. What do they not owe to Camusot! Camusot, by enforcing the July laws, has brought about the elevation of the House of Orleans!—"

The old man protested that he was already involved in railways beyond his means, and he postponed this liberality, of which, however, he recognized the necessity, until an expected rise in stocks should occur.

This half-promise extorted a few days previously had plunged the president's wife into desolation of spirit. It was now doubtful whether the ex-proprietor of Marville could be eligible when the time for the re-election of the Chamber arrived, for it required absolute and peaceful possession for a year and a day.

Fraisier succeeded without difficulty in penetrating into the house as far as Madeleine Vivet. These two viperous natures recognized each other promptly as having issued from the same egg.

"Mademoiselle," said Fraisier suavely, "I should like to obtain a few moments' interview with Madame la Présidente on a personal matter, and one which concerns her property, it is a question, say to her, if you will, of an inheritance.— I have not the honor of being known to Madame la Présidente, therefore my name will signify nothing to her.—I am not in the habit of leaving my office, but I know the consideration due to the wife of a president, and I have taken the trouble to come myself, all the more because the subject does not allow of the least delay."

The matter thus presented, repeated and amplified by the waiting-maid, naturally produced a favorable answer. This moment was decisive for the two separate ambitions contained in Fraisier. Therefore, in spite of all the intrepidity of the little provincial lawyer, pugnacious, bitter and incisive, he felt that which all great captains experience at the opening of a battle upon which depends the

success of a campaign. As he entered the little salon in which Amélie waited for him, he felt that which no sudorific, however powerful it might be, would be able ever to produce again upon his skin, hardened and choked up by odious maladies,— he felt a cold sweat upon his back and on his forehead.

"Even if my fortune is not made," said he to himself, "I am saved, for Poulain promises me health on the day on which perspiration should set in. Madame"—said he, seeing the president's wife, who came forward *en négligé*.

And he stopped short to bow with that subserviency, which among ministerial officers is the recognition of the superior quality of those whom they address.

"Sit down, monsieur," said the president's wife, recognizing at once a man of the legal world.

"Madame la Présidente, if I have taken the liberty of addressing you on a matter which concerns Monsieur le Président, it is that I have the certainty that Monsieur de Marville, in the high position which he occupies, would perhaps let things take their chances, and that he would lose seven or eight hundred thousand francs which the ladies, who in my opinion know much more about private affairs than the best magistrates, would not be so ready to despise."

"You have spoken of an inheritance," said the president's wife, interrupting him.

Dazzled by the sum named, and wishing to hide her astonishment, her delight, Amélie imitated

those impatient readers of novels who cannot wait for the end of the plot.

"Yes, madame, of an inheritance lost to you, oh! quite entirely lost, but which I can, which I shall know how to recover for you."

"Go on, monsieur," said Madame de Marville, coldly measuring Fraisier with a sagacious eye.

"Madame, I know your eminent talents, I, myself, come from Mantes. Monsieur Lebœuf, the President of the Tribunal, the friend of Monsieur de Marville, could give him some information about me.—"

The president's wife shrugged her shoulders with a movement so cruelly significant, that Fraisier was forced to open and close rapidly, a parenthesis in his discourse:—

"A woman so distinguished as you, will understand at once why I speak to you in the first instance of myself. It is the shortest way of arriving at the inheritance."

The president's wife replied, without speaking, to this shrewd remark, by a gesture.

"Madame," resumed Fraisier, encouraged by the gesture to recount his history, "I was an advocate at Mantes, my practice was, as it happened, my whole fortune, for I purchased that of Monsieur Levroux, whom you have doubtless known?"

The president's wife inclined her head.

"With a certain sum which was lent to me and about ten thousand francs of my own, I had just left the office of Desroches, one of the best lawyers in Paris, where I had been head clerk for six years. I

had the misfortune to displease the *procureur du roi* at Mantes, Monsieur—"

"Olivier Vinet."

"The son of the *procureur général,* yes, madame. He was courting a little lady—"

"He?"

"Madame Vatinelle—"

"Ah, Madame Vatinelle, she was very pretty and very—of my time—"

"She was very kind to me; *inde iræ,*" resumed Fraisier. "I was young and active, I wished to pay back my friends and get married; I had to get business and I looked about for it; I soon brewed more for myself alone than all the other ministerial officers. Bah! I had against me all the other attorneys of Mantes, the notaries and even the bailiffs. They tried to catch me in some trickery. You know, madame, that when in our frightful trade they seek to destroy a man, it is soon done. They caught me acting as attorney for both sides in a case. That is rather sharp practice, perhaps; but in certain cases the same thing is done in Paris, —the attorneys pass each other the cassia and the senna. It is not done at Mantes. Monsieur Bouyonnet, to whom I had previously rendered the same little kindness, instigated by his associates and encouraged by the *procureur du roi,* betrayed me.— You see, I hide nothing from you. Well, there was a general cry—I was a scoundrel, they made me out blacker than Marat. They forced me to sell out and I lost everything. I am now in Paris where

I have endeavored to establish an office for affairs; but my ruined health only enables me to work two good hours out of the twenty-four. To-day I have only one ambition, and it is a paltry one. You will be one day the wife of the Keeper of the Seals perhaps, or of the first president; but I, poor and feeble, I have no other desire than to get some place in which I may end my days peaceably, some post in which there is no promotion, some office in which I can simply vegetate. I want to be *juge-de-paix* in Paris. It would be a mere trifle for you and for Monsieur le Président to obtain my nomination, for you doubtless cause sufficient uneasiness to the present Keeper of the Seals for him to be glad to oblige you.— That is not all, madame," added Fraisier, seeing that the president's wife was about to speak, and making a gesture to her. "I have for friend, the doctor of the old man whose property Monsieur le Président should inherit. You see that we are getting on. This doctor, whose co-operation is indispensable, is in the same situation in which you see me—a great deal of talent and no luck!—It is through him that I have learned how much your interests were in danger, for at this very moment in which I am speaking to you it is probable that all is finished—that the will which disinherits Monsieur le Président is made. This doctor wishes to be appointed physician-in-chief of a hospital, of one of the Royal medical colleges; in short, you understand it is necessary for him to have a situation in Paris equivalent to mine.—Pardon me if I have

spoken of matters so delicate, but our affair will not admit of the least ambiguity. The doctor is, moreover, a man in good consideration, learned, and who has saved Monsieur Pillerault, a great-uncle of your son-in-law, Monsieur le Vicomte Popinot. Now, if you have the goodness to promise me these two places—that of *juge-de-paix* and the medical sinecure for my friend, I undertake to bring you the inheritance almost intact—I say almost intact because it will be saddled with some obligations which it will be necessary to give to the legatee and to certain persons whose assistance will be positively indispensable to us. You need not fulfill your promise until after the accomplishment of mine."

The president's wife, who during the last few moments had crossed her arms like a person compelled to listen to a sermon, now uncrossed them, looked at Fraisier, and said to him:

"Monsieur, you have the merit of making perfectly clear all that you have to say about your own affairs, but as to mine, you are of an ambiguity—"

"Two words will suffice to clear up everything, madame," said Fraisier. "Monsieur le Président is the sole and only heir in the third degree of consanguinity, of Monsieur Pons, who is very sick. He is about to make his will, if it is not already done, in favor of a German, his friend, named Schmucke, and the value of the property will be more than seven hundred thousand francs. In three days I hope to have an exact estimate of the amount—"

"If this is so," said the president's wife aloud,

thunderstruck by the possibilities contained in these figures, "I made a great mistake in quarreling with him—in overwhelming him—"

"No, madame, for, were it not for that rupture, he would still be as gay as a lark and would probably outlive you, Monsieur le Président and myself —Providence has its own ways, don't let us explore them!" added he, to disguise the odiousness of this thought. "What would you have? We business agents see things as they are. You understand, now, madame, that in the high position which Monsieur le Président de Marville occupies, he will do nothing, he cannot do anything in the actual condition of affairs. He has quarreled mortally with his cousin, you no longer see Pons, you have banished him from society, you had without doubt excellent reasons for doing so; but the good man is sick, he leaves all his worldly goods to his only friend. A president of the Cour Royale of Paris has nothing to say against a testament in good form made under such circumstances. But between ourselves, madame, it is very disagreeable, when we have a right to an inheritance of seven or eight hundred thousand francs—What do I say?—a million perhaps, and are the sole heir designated by the law, not to receive our own. Only, to arrive at this end, you fall into dirty intrigues; they are so difficult, so tricky, it is necessary to interview such common people, servants and underlings, and to be so intimate with them, that no lawyer, no notary, in Paris, can take up with such an affair. This demands an

attorney without briefs, like myself, whose abilities are serious and real, whose devotion is secure, and whose position, unhappily precarious, is on a level with that of such people—I am occupied in my arrondissement with the affairs of the small bourgeois, of the people, of the laboring classes—Yes, madame, that is the condition to which I have been reduced by the enmity of a *procureur-du-roi,* now become deputy at Paris, and who has never forgiven me my superiority.—I know you well, madame, I know the solidity of your protection, and I have foreseen, in such a service rendered you, the end of my misfortunes and the triumph of Dr. Poulain, my friend."

*

The president's wife remained thoughtful. It was a moment of frightful agony to Fraisier. Vinet, one of the orators of the Centre, *procureur-général* for the last sixteen years, ten times designated for the robe of the Chancellerie, the father of the *procureur-du-roi* of Mantes, now Deputy at Paris, within the last year, was the antagonist of this relentless woman—The haughty *procureur-général* made no pretense of hiding his scorn for President Camusot. Fraisier was ignorant, and would be likely to remain ignorant, of this circumstance.

"Have you nothing else upon your conscience than the act of being an attorney on both sides?" she demanded, looking fixedly at Fraisier.

"Madame la Présidente may see Monsieur Lebœuf; Monsieur Lebœuf was favorable to me."

"Are you sure that Monsieur Lebœuf would give good recommendations of you to Monsieur de Marville, to Monsieur le Comte Popinot?"

"I will answer for it, especially as Monsieur Olivier Vinet is no longer at Mantes; for, between ourselves, that little magistrate also kept the good Lebœuf in terror. Moreover, Madame la Présidente, if you will permit me, I will go to see Monsieur Lebœuf at Mantes. It will not be any delay, for I shall not know certainly the value of the property before two or three days. I wish to, and I must,

conceal from Madame la Présidente all the details of this affair; but will not the price which I expect for my entire devotion be for her a pledge of success?"

"Well, get Monsieur Lebœuf in your favor and if the inheritance has the importance that you give it, which I doubt, I will promise you the two places, provided you succeed, of course."

"I will answer for it, madame. Only, you will have the kindness to send for your attorney and your notary whenever I shall need their assistance, to give me a power-of-attorney to act for Monsieur le Président, and to tell these gentlemen to follow my instructions and to undertake nothing on their own account."

"You have the responsibility," said the president's wife, impressively, "and you ought to have full powers. But is Monsieur Pons so very ill?" she asked, smiling.

"Faith, madame, he might recover, especially when cared for by a man so conscientious as Doctor Poulain, for my friend, madame, is only an innocent spy employed by me in your interest. He is capable of saving that old musician; but there is there by the side of the sick man a concierge who for thirty thousand francs would push him into the grave. She will not kill him, she won't give him arsenic, she will do nothing so charitable, she will do worse, she will assassinate him morally by giving him a thousand annoyances every day. The poor old man, if he were in an atmosphere of silence, of tranquillity, well cared for, kindly treated by

friends, in the country, would recover; but plagued by a Madame Évrard, who, in her youth, was one of the thirty handsome oyster-women that Paris has celebrated, grasping, garrulous and brutal, tormented by her to make a will in which she should have a handsome share—the sick man will inevitably be worried into an induration of the liver, in fact, the calculi may be already forming, and it will be necessary to have recourse, to extract them, to an operation which he will not survive—The doctor, a good soul!—is in a frightful situation. He ought to send away that woman—"

"But this Megæra is a monster!" cried the president's wife, in her fluty little voice.

This vocal likeness between the terrible president's wife and himself, made Fraisier smile inwardly, for he knew very well what to expect from these soft, fictitious modulations of a naturally sharp voice. He recalled that president, the hero of one of the tales of Louis XI., whom that monarch put an end to by a Sign Manuel. This magistrate, endowed with a wife patterned after that of Socrates, and not having himself the philosophy of that great man, caused salt to be mixed with the oats of his horses and forbade that they should be allowed any water. When his wife was driving to her country-place along the banks of the Seine, the horses rushed into the river to drink, carrying her with them, and the magistrate thanked Providence who had so "naturally" relieved him of his wife. In this moment Madame de Marville

was thanking God for having placed beside Pons a woman who would relieve her of him "honestly."

"I would not wish to have a million," said she, "at the price of an impropriety.—Your friend should warn Monsieur Pons and have that concierge sent away."

"In the first place, madame, Monsieurs Schmucke and Pons believe this woman to be an angel, and would send away my friend instead. Then this atrocious oyster-woman is the benefactress of the doctor. It was she who introduced him to Monsieur Pillerault. He recommends to this woman the greatest gentleness with the sick man, but his recommendations only indicate to this creature the means of making the sick man worse."

"'What does your friend think of my cousin's state?" asked the president's wife.

Fraisier made Madame de Marville tremble by the explicitness of his answer and by the clearness with which he penetrated into her heart—a heart as rapacious as that of the Cibot.

"In six weeks the inheritance will be declared."

The president's wife lowered her eyes.

"Poor man!" she said, trying, but in vain, to look sad.

"Has Madame any message to send to Monsieur Lebœuf? I shall take the train to Mantes."

"Yes, wait a moment, I will write to invite him to come and dine with us to-morrow; I shall need to see him to make some arrangement in order to repair the injustice of which you have been the victim."

When the president's wife had left him, Fraisier, who saw himself already *juge-de-paix*, was no longer the same man; he felt larger, he breathed full-lunged the air of happiness and the good wind of success. Dipping up, from the unfathomed reservoir of the will, fresh and powerful doses of that divine essence, he felt himself capable, like Rémonencq, of a crime to insure success, provided that no proofs of it remained. He had advanced boldly before the president's wife, turning conjectures into certainties, confirming this and denying that, with the sole purpose of committing her to the saving of this inheritance and of obtaining her protection. The representative of two lives of immense poverty, and of desires not less immense, he repulsed with a disdainful foot his frightful home in the Rue de la Perle. He foresaw a thousand écus of fees from Madame Cibot, and five thousand francs from the president. That meant the acquisition of a suitable apartment. Then he could pay off his debt to Doctor Poulain. Some of these vindictive natures, bitter and disposed to wickedness by suffering or by disease, are capable of opposite sentiments with an equal degree of violence: Richelieu was as good a friend as he was a cruel enemy. In recognition of the succor which had been given him by Poulain, Fraisier would have let himself be hacked in pieces for him. The president's wife, returning with a letter in her hand, watched for a moment, without being seen herself, this man who was dreaming of a happy and well-provided life, and she

found him less ugly than at the first glance; moreover, he was about to be useful to her, and we look at a tool of our own very differently from the way in which we would look at a neighbor's.

"Monsieur Fraisier," said she, "You have proved to me that you are a man of intelligence and I think you capable of plain speaking."

Fraisier made an eloquent gesture.

"Well," resumed the president's wife, "I summon you to answer candidly one question: Will Monsieur de Marville or myself be compromised by any of your proceedings?"

"I should not have sought you out, madame, if I had expected to have to reproach myself some day for having thrown mud upon you, were it only a speck as big as a pin's head, for on you the spot would seem as large as the moon. You forget, madame, that to become *juge-de-paix* at Paris I must have satisfied you. I have received in my life a first lesson,—it was much too severe for me to expose myself to receive any more such thrashings. Finally, one last word, madame. Every step I take, when it concerns you, will be previously submitted to you—"

"Very good. Here is the letter for Monsieur Lebœuf. I shall expect now information as to the exact value of the property."

"That is the whole matter," said Fraisier, shrewdly, bowing to the president's wife with all the grace which his physiognomy permitted him.

"What a Providence," said Madame Camusot de

Marville to herself. "I shall be rich then! Camusot will be a deputy, for in leaving this Fraisier in the arrondissement of Bolbec he can get us a majority. What a tool!"

"What a Providence!" said Fraisier to himself as he descended the staircase, "what a clever accomplice that Madame Camusot! I ought to have a wife of that kind myself! Now to work!"

He departed for Mantes, where he hoped to obtain the good graces of a man whom he knew but little; but he counted on Madame Vatinelle to whom, unfortunately, he owed all his misfortunes, and the disappointments of love are often like the protested notes of a solvent debtor—they bear interest.

*

Three days later, while Schmucke slept, for Madame Cibot and the old musician had already divided the duty of nursing and watching the patient, she had what she called a "set-to" with poor Pons. It may not be unnecessary to call attention to a sad peculiarity in cases of hepatitis. Invalids whose livers are more or less affected are inclined to be impatient and angry, and these angers give them momentary relief; in the same manner that in accesses of fever an excessive strength is frequently developed. The excitement over, the reaction—the "collapse", as the doctors call it—sets in, and the loss of vital power in the organism is evident in all its gravity. Thus, in liver diseases, more especially in those resulting from severe griefs, the patient falls, after these excitements, into a state of weakness, which is all the more dangerous when he is necessarily subjected to a low diet. It is a sort of fever which fastens upon the temperament of a man, for this fever is neither in the blood nor in the brain. This excitability of the whole being produces a melancholy, in which the patient conceives a hatred, even of himself. In such a condition, anything may cause a dangerous irritation. The Cibot, notwithstanding the doctor's recommendations, did not believe, she being a woman of the people, without experience or education, in this

straining of the nervous system under the irritabilities of temperament. The instructions of Doctor Poulain were to her nothing more than "doctor's talk." She was determined, like all those of the lower classes, to feed Pons well, and she was only prevented from giving him secretly a slice of ham, a good omelet or vanilla chocolate, by the peremptory order of Doctor Poulain.

"Give a single mouthful of anything—no matter what—to Monsieur Pons and it will kill him like a pistol shot."

The obstinacy of the lower classes is so great in this respect that the chief cause of their repugnance to go to hospitals, lies in their belief that persons are killed there by want of food. The mortality caused by food brought secretly by women to their husbands has been so great that it has induced the physicians to prescribe a very severe personal search on the days when the relatives come to see the patients. Madame Cibot, to bring about a momentary quarrel necessary to secure her immediate ends, related her visit to the director of the theatre, not omitting an account of her "set-to" with Mademoiselle Héloïse, the ballet-dancer.

"But what did you go there for?" asked the patient for the third time, wholly unable to stop the Cibot when she was once launched on a flood of words.

"And so, when I had given her a piece of my mind, Mademoiselle Héloïse, who saw plain enough what I was, knocked under, and we ended the best

friends in the world.—You ask me now what it was that I went there for?" she added, repeating Pons's question.

Certain gabblers, and they are gabblers of genius, catch up in this manner the interpolations, the objections and the observations of others, as a sort of provision to furnish matter for their own discourse; —as if the natural source could ever dry up.

"Why, I went there to get your Monsieur Gaudissart out of his trouble; he wants some music for a ballet, and you are scarcely in condition, my dear, to scribble it out on paper and go and fill your place —and I then understood, like that, that they have engaged one Monsieur Garangeot to arrange the music for the 'Mohicans'—"

"Garangeot!" cried Pons in a fury. "Garangeot, a man without any talent! I wouldn't even have him for first violin! He is a man of a great deal of cleverness and he writes very good *feuilletons* on music; but as for composing an air, I defy him to do it!—And where the devil did you get the idea of going to the theatre?"

"But isn't he obstinate, the old demon there!—See, now, my pet, don't boil over that way like a milk-soup.—Can you write music in the state you are now in? Why, you haven't looked at yourself in the glass! Would you like a looking-glass? You are nothing but skin and bones—you are as weak as a sparrow—and you think yourself capable of making your notes—Why, you can't even make my kind—That reminds me, I ought to go up to the

gentleman on the third floor who owes us seventeen francs, and that's worth picking up—seventeen francs; for after I've paid the apothecary there won't be nothing left but twenty francs—I had to say all this to that man, who looks like a good fellow—that Gaudissart—I like that sort of a name—he is a regular Roger Bontemps who just suits me.—He'll never have liver disease, he won't!—So I had to tell him how you were—Gracious! you are not well and he's filled your place for the time being—"

"Filled my place!" cried Pons in a formidable voice, and sitting up in bed.

As a general thing, sick men, and especially those who are within sweep of the scythe of Death, cling to their situations with all the fury which beginners display, in striving to obtain them. Thus, his being replaced appeared to the poor, dying man as a preliminary death.

"But the doctor tells me," he went on, "that I am doing very well, that I will soon resume my ordinary life. You have killed me, ruined me, assassinated me!"

"Ta-ta-ta-ta!" cried the Cibot, "there you go! So, I am your executioner; you say these pretty things always, parbleu! to Monsieur Schmucke behind my back. I know very well what you say—come now! You are a monster of ingratitude!"

"But you don't know that, if my convalescence is retarded only two weeks, they will say to me when I come back that I am an old wig, an old fogy, that my time is passed, that I am of the Empire, Rococo!"

cried the sick man, who wished to live. "Garangeot will have made himself friends in the theatre, from the ticket-office down to the amphitheatre! He will have lowered the pitch for some actress who has no voice, he will have licked Monsieur Gaudissart's boots, he will, through his friends, have published favorable notices of everybody in the journals; then, in a shop like that, Madame Cibot, they can find vermin on the head of a bald man! What demon was it sent you there?"

"But, my goodness! Monsieur Schmucke talked it over with me for a week! What is it you want? You see nothing but yourself! You are selfish enough to kill people to cure yourself! There's that poor Monsieur Schmucke who has been dead tired for a month, he walks on his ankles, he can't go nowhere, nor give lessons, nor do his work at the theatre, for you see nothing at all, then? He takes care of you nights, and I take care of you days. To-day, if I had continued to pass the nights here as I tried to do at first, when I thought that you had nothing serious, I should have had to sleep during the daytime! And who, then, would look after the housekeeping and after the food? What would you have? Sickness is sickness!—that's all there is about it."

"It is impossible that Schmucke could ever have had such a thought—"

"Wouldn't you like to say next that it was I who made this all up under my bonnet? And do you think we're made of iron? But if Monsieur Schmucke had continued his work of going to give

seven or eight lessons every day and spending his evenings from half-past six to half-past eleven at the theatre, directing the orchestra, he would be dead in ten days from now.—Do you want to be the death of that worthy man, who would shed his blood for you? By the author of my days! No one ever saw a sick man as you—What have you done with your common-sense, have you sent it all to the pawn-brokers? Everybody here is exterminated for you—everything is done for the best, and you ain't satisfied—Do you want, then, to drive us crazy enough to be confined?—I, for my part, I'm done for whatever the rest may be!"

The Cibot might talk as she pleased, anger prevented Pons from saying a word. He rolled about in his bed, articulating painfully and with faint interjections, he seemed almost dead. As usual, when it arrived at this point the quarrel suddenly turned to affection. The nurse darted at the sick man, took his head, forced him to lie quiet and drew the covers over him.

"How can any one get into such a state! My poor pet! it's all because of your sickness! That's what the good Monsieur Poulain says. See now, do be quiet—be nice, my good little man. You're the idol of everyone who comes near you, even the doctor himself comes to see you twice a day. What will he say if he finds you in such a state? You put me almost beside myself! It isn't right in you. When anyone has Mame Cibot for nurse they should have some consideration for her—You cry out! You

talk—that's forbidden you! You know it!—To talk, that irritates you!—And why do you go off that way? It is you who are always to blame—and you're always nagging me! Come now, be reasonable! Monsieur Schmucke and I, who love you as we do our own little bowels, we did what we thought best. Well, my cherub, that's all right—see now!"

"Schmucke didn't tell you to go to the theatre without consulting me."

"Must I wake him up, that poor dear man, who is sleeping like a saint, and call him to testify?"

"No, no," cried Pons. "If my good and tender Schmucke took this resolution, I am perhaps sicker than I think I am," said he, casting a look full of awful melancholy on the objects of art which decorated his chamber. "I will have to say farewell to my dear pictures, to all these things of which I have made my friends;—and to my divine Schmucke—oh! can that be true?"

The Cibot, this atrocious actress, put her handkerchief to her eyes. This mute reply made the sick man fall into a sombre reverie. Crushed by these two blows delivered on so sensitive parts, his social life and his physical health, the loss of his situation and the prospect of death, he collapsed so completely that he no longer had the strength to be angry. And he lay there, gloomy as a consumptive at the point of death.

"Don't you see in the interest of Monsieur Schmucke," said the Cibot, perceiving that her

victim was completely broken down, "you would do well to send for the notary of the quarter, Monsieur Trognon, a very worthy man."

"You're always talking to me of this Trognon," said the sick man.

"Oh, it's all the same to me, one or another, for all that you will give me!"

And she shook her head in token of her contempt for riches. Silence reigned once more.

*

At this moment Schmucke, who had been asleep for more than six hours, roused by hunger, arose, came into Pons's chamber, and stood contemplating him, during several moments, without saying a word, for Madame Cibot had put her finger to her lips in making the sign:

"Sh!"

Then she got up, went close to the German in order to whisper in his ear, and said to him:

"Thank God, now he's going to sleep, he's as wicked as a red ass!—What do you think!—he fights against the sickness—"

"No—I am on the contrary very patient," replied the victim, in a piteous tone, which revealed a frightful weakness; "but, my dear Schmucke, she has been to the theatre to have me dismissed."

He paused, he had not the strength to say more. The Cibot profited by this interval to indicate by a sign to Schumcke the state of a brain from which reason has flown, and said:

"Don't contradict him, he will die!—"

"And," resumed Pons, looking at the honest Schmucke, "she pretends that it was you who sent her—"

"Yez," replied Schmucke, heroically, "it vaz nezezzary. Toan'd speak!—led uz zave your laife! —It eez nonzenze to vork yourzelf to death, ven

you haf a dreasure—gate vell, ve vill zell zum pric-à-prac and end our days in beace in zome gorner mit dis goot Montame Zipod."

"She has deluded you," replied Pons, sadly.

Not now seeing Madame Cibot, who had established herself behind the bed in order to make signs to Schmucke, which Pons could not see, the latter thought she had left the room.

"She assassinates me!" he added.

"How? I assassinate you?—" she cried, coming forward with flaming eyes, her hands on her hips. "This is, then, what one gets for the devotion of a spaniel? *Dieu de Dieu!*"

She burst into tears and let herself fall in an armchair, and this tragic action caused a most fatal revulsion of feeling in poor Pons.

"Well," she said, rising and looking at the two friends with those glances of a malignant woman, which deliver at the same time pistol shots and venom, "I'm sick of doing nothing here, but just wearing myself out, body and soul. You must get a nurse!"

The two friends looked at each other in terror.

"Oh! how you two lock at each other like two actors! I have said it! I'm going to ask Doctor Poulain to find us a nurse! And we'll square up our accounts. You will return me all the money I have spent here—and which I would never have asked of you—I, who went to Monsieur Pillerault to borrow from him five hundred francs more—"

"It ees because hee's zo zick," cried Schmucke,

precipitating himself upon Madame Cibot, and seizing her by the waist, "Do haf bayshenze!"

"You, you are an angel, and I'd kiss your foot-prints," said she," but Monsieur Pons never liked me, he has always hated me!—Besides, he may think I want him to put me in his will!"

"Hush! You vill geel heem," cried Schmucke.

"Adieu, monsieur," said she to Pons, overwhelming him with a look. "For all the evil that I wish you, you may live long. When you will be more kind to me, when you'll think that what I do is well done, I will come back! Till then, I shall stay at home—You were my child, and since when has anybody ever seen children turning against their own mothers?—No, no, Monsieur Schmucke, I won't hear nothing. I'll bring you your dinner, I'll wait upon you; but you must get a nurse. Ask Doctor Poulain for one."

And she went out, slamming the doors with so much violence that the precious and fragile objects trembled. The sick man heard a clinking of porcelain, which was, in his torture, like the *coup de grâce* to the victim broken upon the wheel.

An hour later the Cibot, instead of entering Pons's room, came to call Schmucke through the door of the bed-chamber, telling him that his dinner was waiting for him in the dining-room. The poor German went to eat, his wan face covered with tears.

"Mine boor Bons rafes," he said, "vor he bretends that you are a vicket voman. Eet ees hees

zickness," he added, to soften the Cibot, without accusing Pons.

"Oh, I have had enough of him and his sickness! Listen, he is not my father, nor my mother, nor my brother, nor my child. He has took a dislike to me, well, that's enough of it! You, do you see, I would follow you to the end of the world; but when one gives one's life, one's heart, all one's savings, when one neglects one's husband—for there's Cibot ill now—and when one hears herself called a wicked woman—that's a little stronger than coffee, that is."—

"Goffy?"

"Yes, coffee! Let us leave these idle words! Let us come to something positive. For that matter, you owe me for three months at one hundred and ninety francs, that makes five hundred and seventy francs! then the rent which I have paid twice—and here's the receipts—six hundred francs, taking off a sou per franc and your taxes; then twelve hundred less a trifle, and finally the two thousand francs, without interest, remember; a total of three thousand one hundred and ninety two francs.—And you must think that it will be necessary for you to have at least two thousand francs in hand for the nurse, the doctor, the medicines, and to feed the nurse.—That's why I borrowed a thousand francs from Monsieur Pillerault," she added, showing him the thousand-franc note given her by Gaudissart.

Schmucke listened to this account with a

stupefaction quite conceivable, for he was a financier just as cats are musicians.

"Montame Zipod, Bons ees oud ov hees hed! Bardon heem—gondinue to dake gare of heem, remain our brofidence,—I ask eet on my nees."

And the German knelt down before the Cibot and kissed the hands of this executioner.

"Well, listen, my good dear," she said, raising him up and kissing him on the forehead. "There is Cibot sick, he's in bed, I've just sent for Doctor Poulain. In these circumstances I must get my money matters in shape. Besides, Cibot, when he saw me coming down in tears, fell into such a fury that he will not have me put my foot in here again. It's he that insists on getting his money back, and it's his, you know. We women, we can't do anything in a case like this, but if we give back his money to that man, three thousand two hundred francs, perhaps he'll calm down. It's all he's got, the poor man! It's his savings of twenty-six years of management, of the sweat of his brow. He wants his money to-morrow and there ain't no squirming out of it.—You don't know Cibot; when he's in anger, he would kill a man. Well, I might perhaps persuade him to let me continue to take care of you two. You be easy, I shan't mind what he takes it into his head to say to me. I'll bear that martyrdom for your sake, for you're an angel, you are."

"No, I am only a boor man who lofes hees frent, who would gif hees laife to zave heem.—"

"And how about the money? My good Monsieur Schmucke, here's a supposition, should you give me nothing, it will be necessary for you to find three thousand francs for your wants!—My gracious! Do you know what I would do in your place? I should do neither one nor the other, I would sell seven or eight of these stupid pictures and I would replace them by some of those which are in your chamber with their faces against the wall, because there ain't no place to hang them! for one picture is as good as another, so what would it matter?"

"But vy?"

"He is so irritable! it's his sickness, for when he is well he is a lamb! He's capable of getting up and ferreting round; and, if by chance he gets into the salon, though he is so weak he can no longer cross the threshold of his door, he will see the right number still there!"—

"Dat's drue, dat's drue!"

"But we will tell him about the sale when he gets well again. If you confess the sale to him, you can throw all the blame on me because of the necessity of paying me. That's all right—I have a good back—"

"I gannot disbose ov dings dat do not pelong to me," replied the German, simply.

"Well, then I will summon you before the court, you and Monsieur Pons."

"Dat vould gill heem."

"Well, choose!—My gracious! Sell the pictures

and tell him afterwards—you can show him the summons—''

"Very vell, den zummon us—dat vill be mine excuze—I will show him the judshment.—''

The same day at seven in the evening Madame Cibot, who had been to consult the bailiff, called Schmucke. The German found himself in presence of Monsieur Tabareau, who summoned him to make payment; and on the response which Schmucke made, trembling from head to foot, he was summoned—he and Pons before the Court to be adjudged to make payment. The aspect of this official, the stamped paper with its legal scrawl, produced such an effect on Schmucke that he resisted no longer.

"Zell de bigchurs," he said, with tears in his eyes.

*

The next day at six o'clock in the morning Elie Magus and Rémonencq unhooked the pictures each one had selected. Two receipts for two thousand five hundred francs were thus made out in perfectly due form:

"I, the undersigned, on behalf of Monsieur Pons, acknowledge the receipt from Monsieur Élie Magus of the sum of two thousand five hundred francs for four pictures which I have sold to him, the said sum to be employed for the personal needs of Monsieur Pons. One of these pictures attributed to Dürer is the portrait of a woman; the second, of the Italian school, is also a portrait; the third is a Dutch landscape by Breughel, and the fourth, a Florentine picture, representing the Holy Family, by an unknown master."

The receipt given to Rémonencq was in the same terms, and included a Greuze, a Claude Lorrain, a Rubens and a Van Dyck disguised under the name of paintings of the French and Flemish schools.

"Zo much money makse me dink dat doze voolеries are wordh someding," said Schmucke, in receiving the five thousand francs.

"They are worth something"—said Rémonencq.

"I would willingly give one hundred thousand francs for the whole lot."

The Auvergnat, on being asked to render this little service, replaced the eight pictures by others of

the same dimensions in the same frames, choosing them from among inferior paintings which Pons had put in Schmucke's chamber. Élie Magus, once in possession of his four master pieces, brought the Cibot to his house under pretence of regulating their accounts. But once there he complained of poverty, he found defects in the canvases, declared the pictures must be re-backed, and he offered the Cibot thirty thousand francs for her commission; he got her to accept them in showing her the dazzling bits of paper on which the Bank of France engraves the words *Mille Francs.* Magus compelled Rémonencq to give a similar sum to the Cibot by lending it to him on the four pictures, which he made him deposit with him. The four paintings of Rémonencq appeared so magnificent to Magus that he could not bring his mind to give them up, and the day after he brought a premium of six thousand francs to that dealer, who made over the four pictures to him with a bill of sale. Madame Cibot, enriched by sixty-eight thousand francs, again demanded the utmost secrecy from her accomplices; she begged the Jew to tell her how to invest this sum in such a manner that no one should know that she possessed it.

"Buy shares in the Orléans railway, they are thirty francs below par, you will double your investment in three years, and you will get scraps of paper which you can keep in a portfolio."

"Please wait here, Monsieur Magus, I am going to see the business agent of the family of Monsienr

Pons, he wants to know at what price you would take the whole heap of things up-stairs.—I'm going to fetch him."

"If she were a widow!" said Rémonencq to Magus," she would be just my affair, for here she is rich—"

"Especially if she puts her money in the Orléans railway, in two years she will double it. I have put my poor little savings there," said the Jew, "they are to be my daughter's dot. Let us go and take a little turn on the Boulevard, while we are waiting for the lawyer."

"If God would only take Cibot to himself—and he's pretty sick already," resumed Rémonencq, "I should have a fine wife to keep a store, and I could undertake a wholesale business—"

"Good-day, my good Monsieur Fraisier,' said the Cibot, in a wheedling tone, entering the office of her counsellor. "Well, what is this that your concierge tells me—that you are going away from here?—"

"Yes, my dear Madame Cibot; I have taken in the house of Doctor Poulain an apartment on the first floor just above his. I am going to borrow two or three thousand francs to suitably furnish this apartment, which, on my word, is really very pretty, the proprietor has done it up all like new. I am employed, as I told you, in the interest of Président de Marville, as well as in yours—I give up the business of a mere agent, and I am going to have myself inscribed on the list of advocates, and it is necessary to live in a good house. The

advocates of Paris allow to be inscribed on their list only those who are possessed of respectable belongings, a library, etc. I am a doctor of law, I have passed through my licentiate, and I have already powerful protectors. Well, how is our affair going on?"

"If you will accept my savings, which are in the savings-bank," said the Cibot to him, "I have not much—three thousand francs, the fruit of twenty-five years pinching and privation.—You can give me a bill of exchange as Rémonencq says, for I am ignorant, I only know what others tell me—"

"No, the statutes forbid a lawyer to draw bills of exchange; I will give you a receipt, bearing interest at five per cent, and you can return it to me if I get you mentioned for twelve hundred francs of annuity in the will of old Pons."

The Cibot, caught in a net, was silent.

"Silence gives consent," said Fraisier. "Bring it to me to-morrow."

"I will pay you, very willingly, your commission in advance," said the Cibot. "That will be making sure that I'll have my income."

"Where are we now," resumed Fraisier, with an affirmative nod of his head. "I saw Poulain yesterday evening, it seems that you are leading your sick man a fine dance.—Another such attack as that of yesterday, and there will be stones forming in his gall-bladder.—Be gentle with him, do you see, my dear Madame Cibot, it isn't necessary to lay up remorse for one's self, or you won't make old bones."

"Let me alone with your remorse!—Are you going to talk to me some more of the guillotine? Monsieur Pons is an old obstinate—you don't know him! it is he that makes me mad! There ain't no worse man nor him! His relations were quite right, he is sullen, vindictive, obstinate.—Monsieur Magus is at the house, as I told you, and he's waiting for you."

"Good! I will be there as soon as you. It is on the value of this collection that depends the figure of your income; if there are eight hundred thousand francs, you will have fifteen hundred francs a year—that's a fortune!"

"Well, I will tell them to value the things conscientiously."

An hour later, while Pons was sleeping heavily, after having taken from Schmucke's hands an anodyne ordered by the doctor, but of which the dose, unknown to the German, had been doubled by the Cibot, Fraisier, Rémonencq and Magus, these three gallows-birds, examined piece by piece the seventeen hundred objects which composed the collection of the old musician. Schmucke being in bed, these ravens, scenting the carcass, were masters of the situation.

"Don't make no noise," said the Cibot, every time that Magus went into an ecstacy in discussing with Rémonencq some beautiful piece of work, of whose value he instructed him.

It was a heart-breaking spectacle, that of these four different embodied greeds weighing and estimating

the value of this inheritance during the slumber of him whose death was the object of their covetousness. The estimation of the value contained in the salon took three hours.

"On an average," said the dirty old Jew, "each object here is worth a thousand francs."

"That would be seventeen hundred thousand francs," exclaimed Fraisier, thunderstruck.

"Not for me," replied Magus, whose eyes resumed their cold tints. "I would not give more than eight hundred thousand francs; for no one knows how long such property may remain on your hands,—there are masterpieces that can't find a sale before ten years, and the original cost is doubled at compound interest; but I would be willing to pay cash."

"There are in the bed-chamber glasses, enamels, miniatures, snuff boxes in gold and in silver," remarked Rémonencq.

"Can we examine them?" asked Fraisier.

"I will go and see if he's sound asleep," answered the Cibot.

And on a sign from the concierge, the three birds of prey entered.

"There are the masterpieces," said Magus, indicating the salon, every hair of his white beard quivering, "but here are the riches! And what riches! The sovereigns have nothing finer in their treasuries."

*

Rémonencq's eyes kindling at the snuff boxes, glowed like carbuncles. Fraisier, cold and quiet as a serpent coiling for its spring, stretched out his flat head, and stood in the attitude which painters give to Mephistopheles. These three embodied greeds, thirsting for gold as devils thirst for the dews of Paradise, cast, each of them without concert, a glance at the possessor of this wealth, for he had made one of those movements apparently inspired by a nightmare. Suddenly, under the influence of these diabolical glances, the sick man opened his eyes and uttered piercing cries—.

"Thieves! robbers! help, they will murder me!"

Evidently he continued his dreaming, though wide awake, for he sat up in bed, his eyes staring, white and fixed, and without being able to move.

Éli Magus and Rémonencq gained the door, but they were rooted there by these words:

"Magus, here!—I am betrayed!"

The sick man was awake now, roused by the instinct of preservation of his treasures, a feeling fully equal to that of personal preservation.

"Madame Cibot, who is that man?" cried he, shuddering at the sight of Fraisier, who stood motionless.

"My gracious!—could I turn him out," said she,

winking to Fraisier. "Monsieur has just come with a message from your relations—"

Fraisier made an involuntary movement of admiration for the Cibot.

"Yes, Monsieur, I have come from Madame la Présidente de Marville, from her husband and her daughter, to express to you their regrets; they have learned accidentally of your illness, and they would wish to nurse you themselves.—They propose to you to go to their country-seat at Marville to recover your health; Madame la Vicomtesse Popinot, the little Cécile, who loves you so much, will be your sick nurse,—she has taken up your defense against her mother, and she has made her see that she was mistaken."

"And they sent you here, my heirs!" cried Pons indignantly, "giving you for guide the cleverest connoisseur and the keenest expert in all Paris?—Ha! The errand is a good one," he went on, laughing like a madman. "You have come to value my pictures, my curiosities, my snuff-boxes, my miniatures!—Value them! You have with you a man, who not only knows everything in these matters, but who could buy them all, for he is ten times a millionaire.—My dear relations will not have to wait long for my property," he added with profound irony. "They have dealt me my finishing stroke.—Ah! Madame Cibot, you called yourself my mother, and you have brought here the merchants, my rival, and the Camusots while I was asleep!—Get out of here, all of you!"—

And the unhappy man, beside himself through the double effect of anger and fear, leaped out of bed like a fleshless spectre.

"Take my arm, Monsieur," said the Cibot, rushing to him to keep him from falling. "Calm yourself, the gentlemen have gone."

"I wish to see the salon!" said the dying man.—

Madame Cibot made a sign to the three ravens to fly away; then she seized Pons, lifted him like a feather, and put him back into his bed, in spite of his cries. Seeing that the unfortunate collector was utterly exhausted, she went to close the door of the apartment. The three assassins of Pons were still on the landing, and when the Cibot saw them, she told them to wait, overhearing this speech of Fraisier to Magus:

"Write me a letter signed by you both, in which you pledge yourselves to pay nine hundred thousand francs cash for the collection of Monsieur Pons, and we will see that you get a good premium."

Then he whispered in Madame Cibot's ear a word, a single word, which no man could hear, and went downstairs with the two merchants to the porter's lodge.

"Madame Cibot," said the unhappy Pons, when the concierge had returned to him, "have they gone?"

"'Who,—gone?" she demanded.

"Those men!"

"What men? Come, you have seen some men!" said she. You have just had a fine stroke of raging

fever, and if it hadn't been for me, you would have thrown yourself out of the window, and you were talking to me about men—Are you going to be like that all the time?"

"How, there, just now, was there not a man standing there who said he was sent by my family?—"

"Are you going to stand me out about it?" she cried! "My gracious, do you know where you ought to be put? At 'Chalenton!'—Talk about seeing men—"

"Éli Magus; Rémonencq!—"

"Oh! as for Rémonencq, yes, you may have seen him, for he came up just now to tell me that my poor Cibot is so sick that I am going to leave you planted here to get your wits again. My Cibot first of all, do you see! When my man is ill, I, I do not know anybody else. Now, you try to keep quiet and to sleep a couple of hours, for I have sent for Monsieur Poulain, and I will come back with him. —Take your drink, and be good."

"There was no one, then, in my chamber there, just now when I woke up?—"

"No one," said she. "You must have seen Monsieur Rémonencq in the mirror."

"You are right, Madame Cibot," said the sick man, suddenly becoming as docile as a lamb.

"Well, there now, you are reasonable—. Adieu, my cherub, keep yourself quiet, and I will soon be back to you."

When Pons heard the door of the apartment close,

he collected his remaining strength to get out of bed, for he said to himself:

"They are deceiving me! they are plundering me! Schmucke is a baby, who would let himself be tied up in a sack.—"

And the sick man, animated by the desire to clear up the frightful scene, which seemed too real to have been a vision, had strength enough to gain the door of his chamber; he opened it with difficulty and entered his salon, where the sight of his dear pictures, of his statues, of his Florentine bronzes, of his porcelains, revived his heart. The old collector in his dressing-gown, his legs bare, and his brain on fire, was able to walk through the two lanes which were formed by the credence-tables and the sideboards, which divided the room longitudinally into parts. At the first glance of the connoisseur, he counted everything and saw that his museum was intact. He was about to return, when his eye was attracted to a portrait of Greuze put in the place of the "*Chevalier de Malte,*" by Sébastien del Piombo. Suspicion tore its way through his mind, as a lightning-flash stripes a stormy sky. He looked at the places of his eight principal paintings, and found them all replaced by others. The eyes of the poor man were suddenly covered with a black veil, he was taken with a mortal feebleness and fell on the floor. This swoon was so complete that he lay there during two hours; he was found by Schmucke, when the German, having awakened, came out of his own room to go to that of his friend. Schmucke,

with great difficulty lifted the dying man and put him back in his bed; but when he spoke to this quasi-corpse and received in return only a glazed look, and vague and stammering words, the poor German, instead of losing his head, became a hero of friendship. Under the pressure of despair, this child-man had one of those inspirations, such as come to loving women and to mothers. He heated towels—he actually found towels!—he knew enough to wrap them around the hands of Pons, he put them upon the pit of his stomach; then he took his forehead, cold and damp, between his hands, and called back into it the vital spark with a potency of will worthy of Apollonius of Tyana. He kissed his friend upon the eyelids like those "Marys" whom the great Italian sculptors have carved in their bas-reliefs called "Pietas," kissing the Christ. These divine efforts, this transfusion of one life into another, this work of motherhood and of love, were crowned with complete success. At the end of half an hour, Pons, warmed to life, resumed a human aspect; the vital color came back to his eyes, the external heat restored the action of the internal organs. Schmucke made him drink an infusion of balm mixed with wine, the influence of the wine diffused itself through the body, intelligence shone once more upon the brow, lately as senseless as a stone. Pons understood then to what sacred devotion, to what potent friendship, his resurrection was due.

"Without thee, I should have died," he said,

feeling his face softly bathed by the tears of the good German, who laughed and wept at once.

Hearing these words so long waited for, in the delirium of hope, which equals that of despair, poor Schmucke, whose strength was exhausted, collapsed like a burst balloon. It was his turn to give way, he let himself fall into an armchair, clasping his hands and thanking God in a fervent prayer. A miracle had been wrought through him! He had no faith in the power of his prayer put into action, but in that of God, whom he had invoked. Nevertheless, the miracle was an effect of natural causes, as has often been verified by physicians.

A patient surrounded by affection, cared for by persons anxious to save his life, if the chances are equal, will be saved, where another man, in charge of hired nurses, will succumb. The doctors do not care to see in this the effects of involuntary magnetism, they attribute this result to intelligent care, to an exact observance of their orders; but very many mothers know the virtue of these passionate projections of a steady desire.

*

"My good Schmucke—!"

"Toan'd sbeak, I unterzdantz py mein heard—resd! resd;" said the musician smiling!—

"Poor friend, noble creature! child of God, living in God's presence! only being who ever loved me!" —said Pons by interjections, discovering in his voice unknown modulations.

The soul about to take its flight breathed through these words, which gave to Schmucke ecstasies, almost equal to those of love.

"Lif! lif! and I vill begome a lion; I vill vork for too!"

"Listen, my good and faithful and precious friend! Let me speak, time is short, for I am dead, I cannot recover from these repeated shocks."

Schmucke cried like a child.

"Listen now, you may weep afterwards,"—said Pons. "Christian, you must submit. I have been robbed, and it is the Cibot.—Before I leave you, I must tell you certain things about life, for you know nothing of them.—They have taken eight pictures, which are worth very considerable sums."

"Forgif me, I haf zold dem—"

"You!"

"I," said the poor German. "Ve vere zummoned bevor der Gourd."

"Summoned! By whom?"

"Vait a minit."—

Schmucke went to fetch the stamped paper left by the bailiff, and brought it back.

Pons read the mysterious document attentively. Then he let the paper fall and kept silent. This student of human labor, who had up to the present time ignored the moral aspects of life, ended by understanding all the intricacies of the plot hatched by the Cibot. His intuition as an artist, his intelligence as a pupil of the Academy of Rome, all his youth, flashed back upon him for a few moments.

"My good Schmucke, obey me like a soldier. Listen! Go down to the porter's lodge and say to that horrible woman that I wish to see again the person who was sent here by my cousin, the president, and that if he does not come, I intend to bequeath my collections to the Musée; that I am going to make my will."

Schmucke went on the errand; but at the first word the Cibot replied by a smile:

"Our dear sick man has had, my good Monsieur Schmucke, an attack of raging fever and he thought he saw people in his room. I give you my word, as an honest woman, that no one came from the family of our dear sick man."

Schmucke returned with this answer, which he repeated verbatim to Pons.

"She is more daring, more cunning, more astute, more Machiavelian, than I thought for," said Pons, smiling, "She lies, even in her lodge! What do you think, she brought here this morning a Jew named

Élie Magus, Rémonencq, and a third man who is unknown to me, but who is more frightful himself alone, than both the others. She counted on my being asleep to let them appraise the value of my property, but it so happened that I awoke and I saw all three of them weighing my snuff-boxes in their very hands. Then the unknown man said that he was sent here by the Camusots, I talked with him.—That infamous Cibot maintained to me that I was dreaming.—My good Schmucke, I was not dreaming!—I heard the man plainly, he spoke to me.—The two dealers were frightened and took to the door."—I felt sure that the Cibot would deny it!—This plan is useless. I will set another trap into which the infamous creature shall fall.—My poor friend, you take the Cibot for an angel, she is a woman who, for the last month, has been slowly killing me for some covetous end. I could not believe in so much wickedness in a woman who has served us so faithfully for many years. This suspicion has destroyed me.—How much did they give you for those eight paintings?"

"Vife dousant vrancz."

"Good God! They were worth twenty times as much!" cried Pons. "They were the flower of my collection. I have no time now to bring a suit to recover them; besides, it would only be exposing you as the dupe of those swindlers.—A law-suit would be the death of you! You do not know what the law is! It is the sewer of all moral infamies.—At the mere sight of such horrors, souls

like yours succumb. And besides, you will be rich enough. Those pictures cost me forty thousand francs, I have had them for thirty-six years.—But we have been robbed with surprising cleverness. I am on the edge of the grave, I no longer care for anything but you,—for you, the best of human beings. Now, I will not have you stripped of everything, for all that I possess is yours. Therefore, you must learn to distrust all the world, and you have never known what distrust means. God protects you, I know it; but he may forget you for a moment, and then you will be pillaged, like a merchant vessel by buccaneers. The Cibot is a monster, she is killing me! and you see in her an angel; I am going to show you what she is; go and ask her to tell you of a notary who can make my will,—and I will show her to you with her hands in our purse."

Schmucke listened to Pons as if he were reciting the Apocalypse to him. If there really existed a nature so vile as that of the Cibot must be, if Pons were right, then it was for him the negation of Providence.

"My boor frient Bons eez zo zeeck," he said, again descending to the lodge and addressing Madame Cibot, "dat he vantz to mage hees vill; go and ged a nodary—"

This was said in presence of several persons, for the illness of Cibot had by this time become desperate. Rémonencq, his sister, two concierges from neighboring houses, three domestics of other tenants, and the lodger on the first floor fronting the street, were all standing under the porte-cochère.

"Ah! you may just go and find the notary yourself," said the Cibot, with tears in her eyes, "and have your will made by whom you please.— It is not when my poor Cibot is dying that I will leave his bedside—I would give all the Ponses in the world to save Cibot,—a man who has never given me two ounces of grief during the thirty years I have lived with him!—"

And she re-entered her room, leaving Schmucke bewildered.

"Monsieur," said the tenant on the first floor, "Monsieur Pons is then very ill?"

This tenant, named Jolivard, was an employé of the Register Bureau at the Palais de Justice.

"He haz zhust nearly tied!" replied Schmucke, with profound sorrow.

"There is near here, in the Rue Saint-Louis, Monsieur Trognon, a notary," observed Jolivard. "He is the notary for this quarter."

"Should you like me to go and fetch him?" said Rémonencq to Schmucke.

"Eef you bleaze," answered Schmucke. "For eef Montame Zipod gannot nurse mein boor vrient I gannot leafe heem in de sdade he eez in."

"Madame Cibot told us that he was going crazy!—" resumed Jolivard.

"Bons, grazy!" replied Schmucke, terror-stricken. "Nefer has hee hat hees mint zo gut—ant dat eez zhust vat mage me zo uneasy."

All the persons grouped about the speaker, listened to this conversation with a very natural

curiosity, which helped to imprint it on their memories. Schmucke, who did not know Fraisier, had not observed that satanic head with its keen eyes. Fraisier, by throwing two words into the Cibot's ears, had been the originator of this bold scene, which, perhaps, would have been beyond the woman's own powers, but which she now played with surprising ability. To have it believed that the dying man was out of his mind, was one of the corner-stones of the edifice which the man of law was engaged in erecting. The incident of the morning had served him well, and without him, perhaps, the Cibot, in her trouble, might have lost her head at the moment when the innocent Schmucke had come to spread a net for her in requesting her to recall the emissary of the Camusot family. Rémonencq, who saw at this moment Doctor Poulain approaching, asked nothing better than to get away. And for this reason: For the last ten days Rémonencq had been playing the rôle of Providence, —a course singularly displeasing to Justice, who lays claim to representing it in herself alone. Rémonencq was resolved to get rid, at any price, of the one obstacle which stood in the way of his happiness. For him happiness consisted in marrying the appetizing concierge and tripling his capital. So, observing the little tailor as he drank his herb-tea, he conceived the idea of converting his indisposition into a mortal malady, and his business of old-iron dealer furnished him with the means.

One morning as he smoked his pipe, leaning against the post of his shop-door, and while he was dreaming of that fine shop on the Boulevard de la Madeleine, in which should be throned Madame Cibot, gorgeously dressed, his eye fell upon a little copper disk, much oxidized. The idea of cleaning economically, his disk in Cibot's tisane suddenly came to him. He attached this copper, round as a five-franc piece, to a little thread; and while the Cibot was busy with "her gentleman," he went daily to inquire of the health of his friend, the tailor. During this visit of some minutes he put his disk to soak in the tea; and when he went away he pulled it out by the bit of string. This slight addition of copper charged with its oxide, commonly called verdigris, introduced secretly a deleterious element into the beneficial tisane, though in homœpathic proportions, which caused insidious ravages in the patient's system. These were the results of this criminal homœpathy. On the third day, poor Cibot's hair began to fall out, his teeth trembled in their sockets, and all the economy of his organization was disturbed by this imperceptible dose of poison. Doctor Poulain racked his brains on perceiving the effects of this decoction, for he knew enough to recognize the presence of some destructive agent. He carried away the tisane, unknown to everyone, and analyzed it himself; but he found nothing. It so chanced that on that day Rémonencq, frightened at his own work, had omitted to use the fatal disk. Doctor Poulain squared

the matter with his own mind and with the demands of science by supposing that, in consequence of his sedentary life in a damp lodge, the blood of this tailor, forever seated cross-legged on the table before his barred window, had become vitiated and decomposed from want of exercise, and above all, from the perpetual breathing of the exhalations of the fetid street gutter. The Rue de Normandie is one of those old streets with a hollowed roadway, with a gutter down the middle, which the city of Paris has not yet supplied with fountains to wash out the gutters, and in which the black stream of household slops rolls slowly over the paving stones, filtering through them and producing that sort of mud which is peculiar to the streets of Paris.

Madame Cibot, herself, went and came, while her husband, an indefatigable worker, was always seated cross-legged before this window like a fakir. The knees of the tailor became ankylosed, the blood settled in his chest, his legs, shrunken and distorted, became almost useless members. So that the copper-colored skin of the little man seemed to show that he had been naturally sick for a long time. The good health of the wife and the sickness of the husband, seemed to the doctor quite natural.

"What is really the sickness of my poor Cibot?" the concierge had demanded of Doctor Poulain.

"My dear Madame Cibot, he is dying of the disease of door-keepers.—His general debility shows an incurable vitiation of the blood."

*

A crime apparently without object, for no gain, to serve no apparent interest, ended by lulling Doctor Poulain's first suspicions. Who could want to kill Cibot? his wife? The doctor saw her, tasting the tisane of her husband, as she sweetened it. A very considerable number of crimes escape the vengeance of society; they are in general those which are committed, as in this instance, without any startling signs of violence whatever, such as blood stains, strangulation, bruises, or in fact any clumsy blunders; but above all, when the murder is without any apparent cause and is committed among the lower classes. Crime is nearly always betrayed by its antecedents, by hatred, by some obvious cupidity known to the persons who surround it. But in the case of the little tailor, Rémonencq and Madame Cibot, no one had the least interest to seek out the cause of death, excepting the doctor. This sickly, coppered-colored concierge, adored by his wife, was without fortune and without enemies. The motives and the passions of Rémonencq were as safely hidden from sight as the ill-gotten gains of Madame Cibot. The doctor knew the woman thoroughly and all her feelings, he believed her capable of tormenting Pons; but he knew her to be without the motive or the strength to commit a crime; moreover, he saw her taking a spoonful of the tisane

whenever the doctor came and she gave it to her husband to drink. Poulain, the only person able to arrive at the truth, believed there must be some accidental cause, one of those surprising exceptions which render the practice of medicine so uncertain. And in truth the little tailor, unfortunately, in consequence of his stunted existence, was in such a condition of ill-health that this imperceptible addition of verdigris was sufficient to give him his death. The gossips, the neighbors, took a tone which completely screened Rémonencq and gave sufficient reason for this sudden death.

"Ah!" said one, "it is a long time that I have been saying that Monsieur Cibot wasn't well."

"He worked too hard, that man," said another. "He has dried up his blood."

"He wouldn't listen to me," cried a neighbor, "I proposed to him to go out for a walk Sundays, to take a day off occasionally, for it is not too much, to have two days in a week for holidays."

In short, the gossip of the quarter, usually so prompt to accuse, and to which Justice listens through the ears of a commissary of police, that ruler of the lower classes, explained perfectly the death of the little tailor. Nevertheless, the thoughtful air, the uneasy eyes, of Doctor Poulain, made Rémonencq very uncomfortable, so, seeing him approach, he proposed to Schmucke with much eagerness, to go in search of Monsieur Trognon, who was known to Fraisier.

"I will be back by the time the will is made,"

whispered Fraisier to the Cibot, "and, in spite of your grief, you must look after the main chance, you know."

The little lawyer, who disappeared with the lightness of a shadow, met his friend the doctor.

"Eh! Poulain," he cried, "it is all right. We are saved!—I will tell you about it this evening!—Decide what post will suit you and you shall have it! And I, I am *juge-de-paix!* Tabareau will refuse me his daughter no longer.—As to you, I take upon myself to have you marry Mademoiselle Vitel, the grand-daughter of our *juge-de-paix.*"

Fraisier left Poulain a prey to the stupefaction which these extravagant words caused him, and leaped out on the Boulevard like a ball; he hailed a passing omnibus and was in ten minutes deposited by this modern coach at the head of the Rue de Choiseul. It was about four o'clock in the afternoon, Fraisier was sure of finding Madame de Marville alone for the judges scarcely ever left the Palais before five.

Madame de Marville received Fraisier with marks of distinction which showed that, according to his promise, made to Madame Vatinelle, Monsieur Lebœuf had spoken favorably of the former advocate of Mantes. Amélie was almost as caressing to him as the Duchess de Montpensier must have been with Jacques Clément; for the little lawyer was her knife. But when Fraisier presented the joint letter signed by Élie Magus and Rémonencq, in which they pledged themselves to take *en bloc* the collection of

Pons for a sum of nine hundred thousand francs cash, the president's wife turned on the man of law a glance in which all the gold of that sum flashed. It was a tide of covetousness which enveloped the attorney.

"Monsieur le Président," said she, "has requested me to invite you to dine with us to-morrow; it will be a family party; you will meet Monsieur Godeschal, the successor of Mâitre Desroches, my attorney; also Berthier, our notary; my son-in-law and my daughter.—After the dinner, we will have, you and I, the notary and the attorney, that little conference for which you asked, and I will then give you full powers to act. These two gentlemen will obey your directions, as you request, and they will see that *all that* is done properly. You shall have a power of attorney from Monsieur de Marville whenever necessary—."

"I shall have to have it by the day of the death—"

"It shall be held ready."

"Madame la Présidente, if I ask for a power of attorney, and if I desire that your own lawyer shall not appear in this case, it is much less in my interest than in yours—. When I devote myself, I—I devote myself entirely! Therefore Madame, I ask in return the same fidelity, the same confidence from my protectors—I dare not, in your case, say clients. You may perhaps think that in acting thus I wish to fasten myself upon this affair; no, no Madame; but if anything reprehensible were to happen,—for

in a matter of an inheritance one is sometimes carried away—especially by a weight of nine hundred thousand francs—, you could not throw the blame on a man like Mâitre Godeschal, who is known to be integrity itself, but you could easily put it on the back of a miserable agent—"

The president's wife looked at Fraisier with admiration.

"You certainly will go very high or very low," she said to him. "In your place, instead of desiring to retire as a *juge-de-paix*, I should seek to be *procureur-du-roi* at Mantes! and make a great place for myself."

"Leave me to act, madame! The office of *juge-de-paix* is a curate's nag for Monsieur Vitel, I will make of it a war-horse."

The president's wife was thus led into making her final confidence to Fraisier.

"You seem to me devoted so completely to our interest, that I shall confide to you the difficulties of our position, and also our hopes. At the time of a projected marriage between our daughter and an adventurer, who has since become a banker, the president was greatly desirous of augmenting the Marville estate by the purchase of some meadow-lands, then for sale. We relinquished that magnificent property when my daughter was married, as you know; but I am very anxious, my daughter being an only child, to acquire the remainder of these pasture-lands. These beautiful meadows have been already sold in part; they belong to an Englishman who is

about to return to England, having lived there for twenty years. He has built the most charming cottage in a beautiful situation between the park of Marville and the fields which formerly belonged to the estate, and he has bought up to make a park of his own, game preserves, little groves and gardens, at fabulous prices. This cottage and its dependencies greatly embellished this fine piece of landscape and it is adjacent to my daughter's park walls.

The grass-lands and the cottage could be bought for seven hundred thousand francs, the net returns of the meadows are about twenty thousand francs—But if M. Wadman knew that it was we who were seeking to buy the property he would no doubt ask two or three hundred thousand francs more, for he really loses that much, if, as is usually done in country neighborhoods, they value only the land, the buildings going for nothing."

"You are, madame, I think, so well entitled to regard this inheritance as already your own, that I offer to appear in the role of the purchaser on your behalf, and I will engage to get you the property at the lowest possible price under private treaty, as is usually done for dealers in property—." I will present myself to the Englishman in this quality. I understand such affairs; they were my specialty at Mantes. Vatinelle doubled the value of his practice, for I worked under his name—."

"From that came your liaison with little Madame

Vatinelle—That notary ought to be very rich by this time—?"

"But Madame Vatinelle is so extravagant—. Well have no anxiety, madame, I will dish up your Englishman done to a turn."

"If you succeed in this attempt, you have right to my everlasting gratitude. Adieu, my dear Monsieur Fraisier, till to-morrow—."

Fraisier departed, bowing to the president's wife with less servility than on the former occasion.

"I dine to-morrow," he said to himself, "with the President de Marville. Good enough, I have got those people. Only to be absolute master of the whole affair, I must be the counsel of that German in the person of Tabareau, the bailiff of the Justice of the Peace! This Tabareau, who refuses me his daughter, an only daughter, will give her to me if I am *juge-de-paix*. Mademoiselle Tabareau, that tall, red-haired, consumptive girl, owns in right of her mother a house in the Place Royale; I shall then be eligible. At the death of her father, she will have six thousand livres of income more. She is not pretty, but, good Lord! to jump from zero to eighteen thousand francs a year, it is not necessary to look at the ladder!—"

And in returning by the boulevard to the Rue de Normandie, he let himself float along upon the current of these golden dreams; he allowed himself to imagine the happiness of being forever above want; he conceived himself marrying Mademoiselle Vitel, the daughter of the *juge-de-paix*, to his friend

Poulain. He saw himself, supported by the doctor, one of the kings of the quarter, he would rule over the elections, municipal, military and political. The boulevards seem short indeed when, as we walk along them, our ambition goes along also upon the wings of fancy.

*

When Schmucke reascended to his friend Pons, he told him that Cibot was dying, and that Rémonencq had gone for Monsieur Trognon, the notary. Pons was struck by this name, which the Cibot had thrown at him so often in her interminable discourses, in recommending this notary as probity itself. And then the sick man, whose distrust had become absolute since the morning, conceived a luminous idea, which completed the scheme he had formed to baffle Madame Cibot, and expose her completely to the credulous Schmucke.

"Schmucke," he said, taking the hand of the poor German, bewildered by so much news and so many events, "there must be a great confusion in the house; if the porter is at the point of death, we shall be almost at liberty for some moments, that is to say, free from spies, for we are spied upon, you may be sure of it! Go out now, take a cabriolet, drive to the theatre, say to Mademoiselle Héloise, our leading danseuse, that I want to see her before I die, and ask her to come here at half-past ten, when she is through at the theatre. From there, you will go to your two friends Schwab and Brunner, and beg them to come here to-morrow at nine o'clock in the morning, to come to ask how I am, in pretending to have passed by here and to have happened to call—."

This was the plan laid by the old artist, who felt himself dying. He wished to enrich Schmucke by making him his sole heir; and to protect him against all possible chicanery, he proposed to dictate his will to a notary in the presence of witnesses, so that no one could subsequently declare that he was out of his mind, and in order to deprive the Camusots of all pretext for interfering with his last wishes. This name of Trognon made him imagine some machination, he fancied some legal error planned in advance, some treachery premeditated by the Cibot, and he resolved to employ Trognon to witness a will written by his own hand, which he would seal and lock up in a drawer of his bureau. He counted on being able to show to Schmucke, whom he meant to hide in a wardrobe of his alcove, Madame Cibot getting at this will, unsealing it, reading it, and sealing it again. Then the next day at nine o'clock, he wished to destroy this autograph will by another drawn by a notary, which should be legal and incontestable. When the Cibot had treated him as a lunatic and a visionary, he had recognized hatred and vengeance, a greed worthy of the president's wife; for, confined to his bed during two months, the poor man during his sleepless nights and his long hours of solitude had gone over all the events of his life, as if sifting them.

The sculptors, ancient and modern, have often placed on each side of the tomb, Genii who bear lighted torches. These rays show to the dying all their faults and all their errors in lighting them the

road to death. Sculpture here presents a great idea, it formulates a human fact. The death-moment has its own sagacity. Frequently there may be seen simple young girls of the most tender age, endowed with the wisdom of centenarians, become prophets, judges of their families, no longer the dupe of any illusion. This is indeed the poetry of death. But a strange truth, and one worthy of remark: there are two different fashions of dying. This poetry of prophetic intuition, this gift of seeing clearly before and after, appertains only to those dying persons whose physical powers are attacked, and who are perishing through the destruction of the vital organs of the body. Thus those attacked like Louis XIV., by gangrene, consumptive persons, those who die, like Pons, of fever, like Madame de Mortsauf of stomachic trouble, or like soldiers, of wounds received in the vigor of life,—they enjoy this knowledge, this sublime lucidity, and their deaths are surprising, admirable; while those who die of diseases of what we may call the intellectual forces, when the malady is in the brain, in the nervous system, which serves as an intermediary between the body and mind and furnishes the combustion for thought,—these die wholly. In their case, mind and body succumb together. The former, souls without bodies, are the realization of the Biblical spectres; the others are corpses. This virgin man, this epicurean Cato, this just soul well-nigh freed from sin, had penetrated tardily into the recesses, filled with gall, which composed the heart of the

president's wife. He divined the world at the moment of quitting it. Thus for the last few hours, had he gaily assumed his part like a joyous artist, to whom everything is the pretext for a satire or a jest. The last ties which bound him to life, the chains of admiration, the strong links which held the connoisseur to the masterpieces of art, had snapped that morning. In seeing himself robbed by the Cibot, Pons had said a Christian farewell to the pomps and vanities of art, to his collection, to his love for the creators of so many beautiful things, and he wished to think only of death in the spirit of our ancestors, who placed it among the festivals of the Christian. In his tenderness for Schmucke, Pons endeavored to protect him from the bottom of his grave. This paternal thought was the motive for the choice which he had made of the ballet-dancer as a means of succor against the perfidious natures which surrounded him, and who doubtless would never forgive his residuary legatee.

Héloise Brisetout was one of those natures which remain true in a false position, capable of any possible trick at the expense of her rich adorers, a girl of the style of the school of the Jenny Cadines and of the Joséphas; but a good friend, and not afraid of any human power, through having seen the feebleness of them all, and through her skirmishes with the police officers during the carnival and at the champêtre (so-called) Bal of Mabille.

"If she has got my place for her protégé Garangeot,

she will think herself all the more pledged to help me," said Pons to himself.

Schmucke was able to go out without being observed, thanks to the confusion which now reigned in the porter's lodge, and he returned with the very greatest promptness, so as not to leave Pons all alone too long.

Monsieur Trognon arrived to make the will at the moment when Schmucke returned. Though Cibot was at the point of death, his wife accompanied the notary, introduced him into the sick room, and then retired, leaving together Schmucke, Monsieur Trognon and Pons; but she had provided herself with a little hand-glass of curious workmanship, and took her station outside the door, which she left ajar. She could thus not only hear, but see, all that was said and that took place in this moment of supreme importance for her.

"Monsieur," said Pons, "I have, unfortunately, all my faculties, for I think that I am dying; and by the will of God, doubtless, none of the agonies of death have been spared me!—This is Monsieur Schmucke."

The notary bowed to Schmucke.

"He is the only friend I have on the earth," said Pons, "and I wish to make him my residuary legatee; tell me in what form the will should be drawn, so that my friend, who is a German, and knows nothing of our laws, may obtain the property without any contestation."

"It is always possible to contest anything,

Monsieur," said the notary, "it is one of the inconveniences of human justice. But in the matter of testaments, there are those which are incontestable."

"Which ones?" asked Pons.

"A testament drawn up before a notary in presence of witnesses, who certify that the testator is in the possession of his faculties; and if the testator has neither wife, child, father nor brother."

"I have none of them, all my affections are centered in my dear friend Schmucke, whom you see here."

Schmucke wept.

"If then you have none but distant collateral relations, the law allows you the free disposition of your property, real and personal, provided that you do not bequeath it in a way to offend public morality, for you must have seen wills contested on account of the eccentricities of the testators, a will made before a notary cannot be attacked. That is, the identity of the testator cannot be denied, the notary has certified to his sanity, and the signature cannot be disputed—. Nevertheless, a will drawn up in the testator's own handwriting, in legal form, and clearly, is seldom open to discussion."

"I have decided, for reasons known to myself, to write under your dictation a will with my own hand and to give it in charge to my friend here.—Can it be done?"

"Certainly," said the notary, "will you write? I will dictate."

"Schmucke, give me my little writing-desk of

Boulle—monsieur, dictate in a low voice, for," he added, "someone may be listening."

"Tell me then, as to your intentions," said the notary.

At the end of ten minutes, the Cibot, who was visible to Pons in the mirror, saw the will sealed after the notary had examined it and while Schmucke lit a candle; then Pons handed the document to Schmucke, telling him to lock it up in a private drawer in the secretary. The testator asked for the key of the secretary, tied it in a corner of his handkerchief and put the handkerchief under his pillow. The notary, appointed executor by courtesy, and to whom Pons bequeathed a valuable picture, one of the things which the law permits a notary to accept, then left the room and found Madame Cibot in the salon.

"Well monsieur, has Monsieur Pons remembered me?"

"My dear woman, you don't expect a notary to betray the secrets that are confided to him," replied Monsieur Trognon. "All that I can tell you is that there will be a great deal of cupidity foiled and a great many hopes disappointed. Monsieur Pons has made an admirable will, full of good sense, a patriotic will and one of which I highly approve."

It is difficult to imagine the degree of curiosity to which the Cibot was stimulated by these words.

She went down and passed the night at Cibot's bedside, resolving to put Mademoiselle Rémonencq in her place and go up and read the will between two and three o'clock in the morning.

*

The visit of Mademoiselle Héloïse Brisetout at half-past ten at night seemed natural enough to the Cibot, but she was so alarmed lest the danseuse should speak of the thousand francs given by Gaudissart that she accompanied her up the stairs with a profusion of politeness and flatteries, as though she were a sovereign.

"Ah! my dear, you are very much better on your own ground than at the theatre," said Héloïse as they mounted the stairs. "I advise you to stay in your own place."

Héloïse, escorted in a carriage by Bixiou, the friend of her heart, was magnificently dressed, for she was going to a soirée given by Mairette, one of the most illustrious leading-ladies of the Opéra. M. Chapoulot, a former fringe-maker of the Rue Saint-Denis, the tenant of the first floor, who was just returning from the Ambigu-Comique with his daughter, was dazzled, as well as his wife, by meeting such a toilet and so pretty a woman on the staircase.

"Who is it, Madame Cibot?" demanded Madame Chapoulot.

"She is a nobody, a tumbler who can be seen half-naked any night for forty sous,"—replied the concierge in the ear of the fringe-maker's wife.

"Victorine," said Madame Chapoulot to her

daughter, "my little girl, let madame pass at once."

This cry of a frightened mother was understood by Héloïse who turned round:

"Is your daughter then more inflammable than tinder, madame, that you fear she will take fire in touching me?"

Héloïse looked at Monsieur Chapoulot with an agreeable air, smiling.

"On my word she is very pretty off the stage!" said Monsieur Chapoulot, lingering on the landing.

Madame Chapoulot pinched her husband to the point of making him cry out, and pushed him into their apartment.

"Well, here is," said Héloïse, "a second-floor which is about as high as a fourth."

"Mademoiselle is, however, accustomed to climbing up," said the Cibot, opening the door of the apartment.

"Well, my old man," said Héloïse, entering the chamber, where she saw the poor musician lying pale and with a shrunken face, "so you are not very well? Everybody at the theatre is anxious about you; but you know how it is, though people have good hearts yet every one has his own affairs to attend to and cannot find an hour in which to come and see his friends. Gaudissart has been talking of coming to see you every day, and every morning he is caught by some of the worries of business. Nevertheless we all love you—"

"Madame Cibot," said the sick man, "do me the

favor to leave me alone with mademoiselle. We have some theatrical business to talk about and my place of leader of the orchestra.—Schmucke will show madame out."

Schmucke, at a sign from Pons, ushered the Cibot through the door and drew the bolt behind her.

"Ah, the beggarly German, he is getting corrupted too, is he," said the Cibot to herslf, hearing this significant sound. "It is Monsieur Pons who teaches him all this terrible stuff,—but you will pay me for that, my little friends,"—she repeated to herself as she went down the stairs. "Bah! if that she-mountebank of a tumbler speaks to him of the thousand francs I will swear to them that it is nothing but a theatre joke."

And she sat down by the bedside of Cibot, who was complaining of his burning stomach, for Rémonencq had given him something to drink in his wife's absence.

"My dear child," said Pons to the danseuse, while Schmucke was getting rid of the Cibot, "I can trust to no one but you to get me a notary, an honest man who will come to-morrow morning at half past nine o'clock precisely, to make my will. I want to leave all I have to my friend Schmucke. If this poor German should be persecuted, I rely upon this notary to advise him and defend him. This is the reason why I want a notary of reputation, one of wealth, one above all those considerations which tempt ordinary lawyers, for my poor legatee will need to find a support in him. I don't trust

Berthier, in the line of succession from Cardot, and you know so many people—"

"Eh! I have your man," replied the dancer; "the notary of Florine, the Comtesse du Bruel, Léopold Hannequin, a virtuous man who doesn't know what a lorette is! He is like a fairy god-father, an honest man who won't let you commit any follies with the money you earn; I call him the father of figurantes, for he has inculcated principles of economy in all my friends. In the first place, he has sixty thousand francs of income besides his practice. Then he is a notary such as notaries used to be in the old times! He is a notary, when he walks, when he sleeps; he has produced nothing but little notaries and notaresses.—In short, he is a man heavy and pedantic; but he is a man who would not yield before any power whatever, when he is in the exercise of his functions. He has never had any woman to plunder him, he is a fossil father of a family! He is adored by his wife, who doesn't deceive him, although she is a notary's wife. What would you have, there is nothing better in Paris in the way of a notary. He is patriarchal. He is not droll and amusing as Cardot was with Malaga, but he will never run away like little What's-his-name who lived with Antonia! I'll send you my man tomorrow morning at eight o'clock.—You can sleep in peace. Besides, I hope that you are going to get well, and that you will make us a great deal more pretty music; but after all, life is sad enough; the managers shilly-shally, kings are niggardly, the

ministers make a mess and the rich men economize.—The artists have no longer anything but this!" she said, striking her heart. "It is a good time to die in.—Adieu old man."

"I ask you above all things, Héloïse, the greatest discretion."

"It is not an affair of the theatre," said she, "it is sacred, it is for an artist."

"Who is your monsieur now, little one?"

"The Mayor of your arrondissement, Monsieur Beaudoyer, a man as stupid as the late Crevel; for, you know, Crevel, one of Gaudissart's old stock company, died a few days ago and he actually left me nothing, not so much as a pot of pomatum. That is what makes me say to you that our century is disgusting.

"What did he die of?"

"Of his wife.—If he had stayed with me, he would be alive now! Good bye, my dear old fellow! I talk to you about departing this life because I see you in two weeks from now promenading along the boulevards and smelling out your pretty little curiosities, for you are not sick, your eyes are brighter than I have ever seen them—"

And the dancer went away certain that her protégé, Garangeot, was secure in his grasp of the baton of leader of the orchestra. Garangeot was her first-cousin.—All the doors of the staircase were ajar and all the householders afoot to see the leading dancer pass out. It was the great event in the house.

Fraisier, like those bull-dogs which never release their hold on the morsel which they have between their teeth, was stationed in the porter's lodge beside Madame Cibot when the ballet-dancer passed under the porte-cochère and called for the door. He knew that the will was made, he had just sounded the concierge; for Maitre Trognon, notary, declined to say a word about the testament, as well to Fraisier as to Madame Cibot. Naturally the man of law noticed the danseuse, and promised himself to make some use of this visit *in extremis*.

"My dear Madame Cibot," said Fraisier, "this is for you a critical moment."

"Ah yes,"—said she, "my poor Cibot.—When I think that he will not live to enjoy what I am going to get."

"The question is, to know if Monsieur Pons has left you anything; that is, if you are mentioned in the will, or if you have been forgotten," said Fraisier continuing. "I represent the natural heirs, and you will have nothing, except from them, in any case.—The will is in his own handwriting. It is consequently very easily attacked.—Do you know where our man has put it?"

"In the private drawer of his secretary, and he took the key and tied it in a corner of his handkerchief and he put the handkerchief under his pillow.—I saw it all."

"Was the will sealed?"

"Alas, yes."

"It is a crime to abstract a will and to suppress

it, but it is only a misdemeanor to look at it, and after all, what of that? A peccadillo which will not have any witness. Does he sleep heavily, our old man?"

"Yes; but that day, when you were examining and valuing the things, he ought to have slept like a top and he woke up— However, I am going to see. This morning I will go and relieve Monsieur Schmucke at four o'clock and if you wish to come then you will have the will in your hand for ten minutes.—"

"Good, I will get up at four o'clock and I will come and knock very softly—"

"Mademoiselle Rémonencq, who takes my place by the Cibot, will know you are coming and will pull the cord; but tap at the window so as not to wake anybody."

"That is understood," said Fraisier, "you will have a light, won't you? A candle, that will be enough for me.—"

At midnight the poor German, seated in an arm-chair, overwhelmed with sorrow, was looking at Pons, whose face, drawn like that of a dying man, showed such signs of exhaustion after so many fatigues, that he seemed to be on the point of expiring.

"I think that I have just strength enough to last till to-morrow evening," said Pons philosophically. "My death will come without doubt, my poor Schmucke, in the course of to-morrow night. As soon as the notary and your two friends have left me, you will go and fetch our good Abbé

Duplanty, the vicar of the church of Saint-François. This worthy man does not know that I am sick, and I wish to receive the holy sacrament to-morrow at mid-day.—"

He made a long pause.

"God has not willed that life should be to me what I longed for," he resumed. "I could have loved a wife, children, a family, so well!—To be cherished by a few faces in a quiet home was my sole ambition. Life is bitter to everybody, for I have seen others having all these things which I so vainly desired, and they were not happy.—At the close of my life the good God has enabled me to find an unhoped-for consolation in giving me such a friend as thou!—And I have not to reproach myself with ever having misunderstood or not appreciated thee, my good Schmucke; I have given thee all my heart, and all my powers of loving.—Don't weep, Schmucke, or I must be silent, and it is so sweet for me to talk to thee of ourselves.—Had I listened to thy advice I would have lived. I would have quitted the world and my old habits and I should not have received this mortal wound, but now I desire to concern myself only with thee!"

"Toan'd dink ov me!—"

"Do not oppose me, listen to me, my dear friend.

"Thou hast the innocence, the candor, of a child of six years, that has never left its mother's side, that is very proper, it seems to me that God himself should take care of beings like to thee. But men are so wicked that I must forewarn thee against

them. Thou art about to lose thy noble confidence, thy sacred credulity, that grace of spotless souls which belongs only to men of genius, or to hearts like thine.—Thou wilt presently see Madame Cibot, who watched us through the opening of the half-closed door, come in and take this false will.—I presume that the hussy will do this this morning, when she thinks that thou art asleep. Listen to me well, and follow my instructions to the letter.—Do you hear me?" asked the sick man.

Schmucke, overwhelmed with grief and seized with a fearful trembling, had let his head fall on the back of his chair and seemed to have fainted away.

"Yez, I hear you, put as eef you vere do hundret veet avay.—Eet zeems to me zat I vill zink into der doom mit you," said the German, whose misery was crushing him.

He came near to Pons, took one hand, which he held between his own, and offered up, mentally, a fervent prayer.

"What art thou murmuring to thyself in German?—"

"I hafe brayed to Gott to take uz to heemself togedder," replied he simply, when he had finished his prayer.

Pons leaned over with difficulty, for he suffered an intolerable pain in his liver. He stooped until he touched Schmucke and kissed him on the forehead, shedding his soul like a benediction upon this fellow-creature, comparable to the lamb which reposes at the feet of God.

"So, now listen to me, my good Schmucke, the dying must be obeyed."

"I leesen."

"There is an entrance from your chamber into mine, by the little door in your alcove which opens into one of the cabinets of mine."

"Yez, put eet ees all joked up mit bictures."

"You must then clear them out immediately, without making too much noise."

"Yez."

"Clear the passage at both ends, into your room as into mine, then leave your door ajar. When the Cibot comes to relieve your watch—and she is likely to come an hour earlier than usual this morning—you must go away as usual, as if to sleep, and you will appear to be very tired. Try to put on a sleepy air.—As soon as she settles in her chair, come through your door and keep watch there, opening the little muslin curtain of that door and watch well all that happens.—You understand?"

"I unterstant you. You dink dat she-fillain vill purn der vill."

"I don't know what she will do, but I am sure that you will never think her an angel afterwards. Now give me some music, comfort me with one of your improvisations.—That will occupy your mind, you will lose your gloomy ideas and you will fill for me this sorrowful night with your poems."

Schmucke placed himself at the piano. Thus invoked, and at the end of a few minutes, the musical inspiration, quickened by the quivering of grief

and the agitation which it caused him, transported, as it ever did the good German, beyond the confines of earth. He found sublime themes, upon which he embroidered variations executed now with the sorrow and the Raphaelesque perfection of Chopin, now with the passion and the Dantesque grandeur of Liszt, the two musical organizations which approach the nearest to that of Paganini. Execution brought up to this degree of perfection puts the performer apparently on the level of the poet; he is to the composer what the actor is to the author, a divine interpreter of things divine. But during this night, in which Schmucke made Pons to hear, in advance, the concerts of heaven, that delicious music which made the instruments fall from the hands of St. Cecilia, he was at once Beethoven and Paganini, the creator and the interpreter! Inexhaustible as the nightingale, sublime as the sky beneath which it sings, rich and varied as the forest which it fills with its roulades, he surpassed himself, and plunged the old musician who listened to him, into the ecstacy which Raphael has painted and which all the world goes to see at Bologna. This poem was interrupted by a frightful ringing. The maid of the tenants of the first-floor came to beg Schmucke, in her employers' names, to put a stop to this Sabbat. Monsieur, Madame and Mademoiselle Chapoulot having been awakened could not go to sleep again, and they begged to observe that the day was long enough to rehearse theatrical music, and that in a household in the Mairie, no one ought to strum the

piano all night.—It was about three o'clock in the morning. At half-past three, as foretold by Pons, who really seemed to have overheard the conference between Fraisier and the Cibot, the concierge appeared. The sick man gave Schmucke an intelligent look which meant, "did I not guess right?" and then settled himself in the position of a man who was sound asleep.

Madame Cibot's belief in Schmucke's simplicity was so profound—and in this may be found one of the chief means as well as the chief reason of the success of children's stratagems,—that she could not suspect him of falsehood when he came to her and said to her with an air at once woeful and joyful,—

"He has hat a treatful nighd; mit a tiapolic egzitement! I vas opliged to make some muzeec to galm him ant der lotgers on die first floor zent vord to me to ztop!—It is frightful, for it conzerns ze life of my frient. I am zo dired mit playing der music all nighd long dat I am ready to trob dis mornings."

"My poor Cibot also is very sick, and one day more like that of yesterday, there will be no hope for him.—But what can one do? It is the will of God."

"You haf a heart so honest, zo goot a zoul, zat if der poor Zibod dies ve vill live togedder!"—said the wily Schmucke.

When simple and upright people begin to dissemble they are terrible, absolutely like children who set their traps with the perfect skill of savages.

"Well, you go and sleep, my son!" said the Cibot, "your eyes are so tired that they are popping out of your head. Go now, what would console me for the loss of Cibot, that would be to think that I could finish my days with a good man like you. Well, be easy, I'll lead that Madame Chapoulot a pretty dance.—The idea of a retired shop-keeper putting on such airs."

Schmucke went and posted himself for observation, in the place he had arranged.

The Cibot had left the door of the apartment ajar, and Fraisier after having entered, closed the door very softly when Schmucke had shut himself up in his own apartment. The attorney was furnished with a lighted candle and with a piece of very fine brass wire with which to open the will. The Cibot was able to extract the handkerchief in which the key of the secretary was knotted, and which she found under Pons's pillow, all the more easily that the sick man had carefully left the end of it in sight below the bolster, and that he lent himself to her manœuvre by keeping his nose turned toward the wall, and in a position which made it easy for her to draw away the handkerchief. The Cibot went straight to the secretary, opened it, trying to make as little noise as possible, found the spring of the secret drawer and ran with the will in her hand into the salon. This strange proceeding puzzled Pons to the utmost. As for Schmucke, he was trembling from head to foot as if he had committed a crime.

"Go back to your post," said Fraisier receiving

the will from the Cibot, "for if he wakes up he must see you there."

After unsealing the envelope, with an adroitness which proved that this was not his first attempt, Fraisier was plunged into profound astonishment by the perusal of this remarkable document.

"THIS IS MY WILL.

"To-day, April 15, 1845, being of sound mind, as this will written in presence of M. Trognon, notary, will prove; feeling that I am about to die soon of the disease under which I have been suffering since the early part of February last, and desiring to dispose of all my property, I hereby make known my last wishes as follows:

"I have always been struck with the unfortunate circumstances which injure the great masterpieces of painting and which often have brought about their destruction. I have pitied noble pictures condemned to travel from country to country, without ever being able to remain stationary in any one place, where the admirers of these chefs-d'œuvre might go to see them. I have always thought that these truly immortal productions of the famous masters should be national property, and should be kept continuously before the eyes of the people, like light itself, God's own masterpiece, which shines for all His children.

"And Whereas, having passed my life in collecting and choosing certain pictures which are glorious

works of the greatest masters, which pictures are in their first condition, not retouched nor repainted, I have not considered without pain that these canvases, which have been the happiness of my life, might come to the hammer, and go, some of them to England, some of them to Russia, dispersed and scattered as they were before they came together in my possession; I have therefore resolved to save them from such peril, and also the magnificent frames which enclose them, and which are all by the hands of skilful workmen.

"Therefore, with such motives, I give and bequeath to the King, to make part and parcel of the Musée du Louvre, the pictures which compose my collection, on condition, in case the legacy be accepted, that he shall pay to my friend, Wilhelm Schmucke, an annuity of two thousand four hundred francs.

"If the King, as usufructuary of the Musée, does not accept the legacy on this condition, then the said pictures are to become part of the bequest I hereby make to my friend Schmucke of all the property of which I die possessed, directing him to give my 'Head of a Monkey,' by Goya, to my cousin, the President Camusot; the 'Flower Piece,' tulips, by Abraham Mignon, to M. Trognon, notary, whom I appoint my executor, and to pay a yearly sum of two hundred francs to Madame Cibot, who has had charge of my household for the last ten years.

"And finally, I request my friend Schmucke to give 'The Descent from the Cross,' by Rubens,

the sketch of his famous picture at Antwerp, to my parish church for the decoration of a chapel, in gratitude for the kindness shown me by Monsieur le Vicaire Duplanty, to whom I owe the privilege of dying as a Christian and a Catholic," etc.

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"It is ruin!" said Fraisier, "the ruin of all my hopes! Ah! I begin to believe what the president's wife told me about the malignity of this old artist.—"

"Well," said the Cibot, coming in.

"Your monsieur is a monster, he gives everything to the Musée, to the State. Now, you cannot bring a suit against the State.—The will cannot be broken. We are robbed, ruined, plundered, assassinated—!"

"What has he given me?—"

"Two hundred francs a year.—"

"A fine bequest! Why! he is a complete rascal!—"

"Go in and watch," said Fraisier, "I am going to put the will of your blackguard back in the envelope."

As soon as Madame Cibot had turned her back, Fraisier adroitly substituted a sheet of blank paper in place of the will, which he put in his pocket; then he resealed the envelope with so much skill that he showed the seal to Madame Cibot when she returned, asking her if she could see the slightest trace of the operation. The Cibot took the envelope, felt it all over, found it full and sighed heavily. She had hoped that Fraisier might have burned the fatal paper himself.

"Well, what are we to do, my dear Monsieur Fraisier?" she demanded.

"Ah! that is your affair! As for me, I am not an heir, but, if I had the slightest right to that," said he, indicating the collection, "I know very well what I should do.—"

"That is just what I am asking you," said the Cibot, with an air of stupidity.

"There is a fire in the chimney-place,"—replied he, rising to go away.

"Anyhow, nobody but you and I would know about it," said the Cibot.

"It can never be proved that a will has existed," returned the man of law.

"And you?"

"I!—If Monsieur Pons dies without a will, I will guarantee you one hundred thousand francs."

"Ah yes, I know," said she, "people will promise you mountains of gold and when it comes to paying they will cut you down like—"

She stopped just in time, for she was on the point of speaking of Elie Magus to Fraisier.—

"I am off," said Fraisier. "It won't do, for your sake, for me to be seen in this apartment; but I'll meet you below in the lodge."

After having closed the door, the Cibot returned, the will in her hand, fully determined to throw it into the fire; but when she got back into the chamber and moved toward the chimney she felt herself seized by the two arms!—She saw herself between Pons and Schmucke, who had both been

standing close against the partition-wall, on each side of the door.

"Ah!" screamed the Cibot.

She fell flat on her face in frightful convulsions, whether real or pretended was never known. The sight made such an impression on Pons that he was seized with a deadly faintness, and Schmucke left the Cibot on the floor while he put Pons back into bed. The two friends trembled like persons who, in the execution of a painful purpose, have exceeded their strength. When Pons was again in bed, and when Schmucke recovered something of his self-possession, they heard sobs. The Cibot, on her knees, dissolved in tears, stretched her hands toward the two friends, supplicating them in a most expressive pantomime.

"It was pure curiosity!" she cried, seeing that she had attracted the attention of the two friends; "my dear Monsieur Pons! that is the failing of all women, you know! But I did not know how to read your will, and I was bringing it back."

"Ged oud!" cried Schmucke, springing to his feet and swelling with all the majesty of his indignation. "You air a monzder! you have dried to gill my good Bons. He vas righd! you air vorse zan a monzder, you air a tefil!"

The Cibot, seeing the horror which was painted on the face of the honest German, rose, proud as Tartuffe, threw upon Schmucke a glance which made him tremble, and went out, carrying under her gown a glorious little picture by Metzu, which Élie

Magus had greatly admired and which he had called "a gem." The Cibot found Fraisier waiting for her in the lodge, hoping that she had burned the envelope and the blank paper which he had substituted for the will; he was much astonished when he saw his terrified client with her convulsed visage.

"What has happened?"

"What has happened, my dear Monsieur Fraisier, is that under pretext of giving me good advice and of directing me, you have made me lose forever my annuity and the good-will of those gentlemen.—"

And she launched into one of those torrents of words in which she excelled.

"Do not talk so much foolishness," said Fraisier, dryly, stopping his client short, "get to the fact, get to the fact! and quickly."

"Well, then, it was just this way."

She recounted the scene as it had taken place.

"I have made you lose nothing," said Fraisier. "Those two gentlemen have doubted your honesty or they would not have set that trap; they were waiting for you, they have been watching you.—You do not tell me all,"—added the man of law, casting a tigerish look on the woman.

"I! Hide anything from you!—after all that we have done together!"—said she, shuddering.

"But, my dear, I have done nothing reprehensible!" said Fraisier, manifesting thus his intention of denying his nocturnal visit to Pons's apartment.

The Cibot felt her hair stand on end, and an icy chill enveloped her.

"What do you mean?"—said she, stupefied.

"It is a criminal affair, all complete!—You can be charged with abstracting a will."

The Cibot gave a start of terror.

"Make your mind easy, I am your counsel," he added. "I have only wished to show you how easy it would be, in one way or another, to bring about what I warned you of. Come now, what is it that you have done to make that German, who is so innocent, hide himself in the room without your knowing it?"

"Nothing at all! it was that affair of the other day when I maintained to Monsieur Pons that he had seen double. Ever since that day those two gentlemen have turned right round against me. And so you are the cause of all my troubles, for even if I had lost my hold over Monsieur Pons I was sure of the German, who was already speaking of marrying me, or of taking me with him, it is all the same thing."

This explanation was so plausible that Fraisier was obliged to accept it.

"Do not fear," he resumed, "I have promised you the annuity, I shall keep my word. Up to this time everything in this affair was hypothetical, but now it is worth bank-notes. You shall not have less than twelve hundred francs a year.—But it will be necessary, my dear Madame Cibot, that you should obey my orders and execute them intelligently."

"Yes, my dear Monsieur Fraisier," said she with servile submission, for she was completely crushed.

"Very well, adieu," replied Fraisier, leaving the lodge and carrying off with him the dangerous will.

He returned home joyous, for the document was a powerful weapon.

"I will have," said he, "a strong security against the bad faith of Madame la Présidente de Marville. If she should take it into her head not to keep her word, she shall lose the inheritance."

At daybreak, Rémonencq, after having opened his shop and leaving it in charge of his sister, went, according to a custom which he had adopted within the last few days, to enquire after his good friend Cibot, and he found Madame Cibot contemplating the picture by Metzu, and asking herself why a little bit of painted wood should be worth so much money.

"Ah! Ah!" said he, looking over her shoulder, "that is the only one Monsieur Magus regretted not having; he said that with that little thing there, nothing would be wanting to his happiness."

"What will he give for it?" asked the Cibot.

"Now, if you will promise to marry me in the year of your widowhood," answered Rémonencq, "I'll engage to get you twenty thousand francs from Élie Magus, and if you don't marry me you will never be able to sell that picture for more than one thousand francs."

"Why not?"

" Because you would be obliged to give a receipt as the owner of it, and you would then have a lawsuit with the heirs. If you are my wife, it is I who will

sell it to Monsieur Magus, and nothing is required of a dealer but the entry of the purchase in his books, and I will write that Monsieur Schmucke sold it to me. Come, put that little board in my hands.—If your husband dies, you might be a good deal bothered about it, and no one would think it queer that I had a picture among my goods. You know me well enough. Besides, if you like, I will give you a receipt."

In the criminal situation in which she was surprised, the rapacious concierge agreed to this proposal, which put her forever in the power of the dealer.

"You are right, bring me a receipt," she said, locking the picture up in her bureau.

"Neighbor," said the dealer in a low voice, drawing the Cibot to the threshold of the door, "I see plainly that we cannot save our poor friend Cibot; Doctor Poulain gave him up yesterday evening and said he could not last out the day.—It is a great misfortune! But after all, you are not in your right place here.—Your right place would be in a fine curiosity shop in the Boulevard des Capucines. Do you know that I have made very near a hundred thousand francs in ten years, and that if you should have as much some day, I'll engage to make a fine fortune for you,—if you are my wife. You will be a bourgeoise,—well served by my sister who will do the housekeeping, and—"

The tempter was interrupted by the heart-rending moans of the little tailor, whose death agony was beginning.

"Go away," said the Cibot, "you are a monster to talk to me of these things when my poor man is dying in such a state."

"It is because I love you," said Rémonencq, "I'd stop at nothing in order to have you."

"If you loved me you would say nothing to me just now, she replied.

And Rémonencq returned to his shop, sure of marrying the Cibot.

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At ten o'clock there was around the door of the house a sort of tumult, for the last sacraments were being administered to Monsieur Cibot. All his friends, the concierges, the porters, male and female, of the Rue de Normandie and the adjacent streets, crowded the lodge, the porte-cochère and the pavement before the house. No one, therefore, paid the least attention to Monsieur Léopold Hannequin, who came with one of his associates, nor to Schwab and Brunner, who were able to go up to Pons's apartment without being seen by Madame Cibot. The concierge of the neighboring house, of whom the notary enquired on which floor Monsieur Pons lived, designated the apartment to him. As to Brunner, who came with Schwab, he had already been in the house to see the Pons collection, he passed without asking anyone and showed the way to his companion.—Pons formally revoked his will of the day before and bequeathed his whole property to Schmucke. This act accomplished, Pons, having thanked Schwab and Brunner and after having earnestly commended the interests of Schmucke to the care of Monsieur Léopold Hannequin, sank into such a condition of exhaustion in consequence of the energy which he had displayed, both in the nocturnal scene with the Cibot and also in this last act of his social life, that Schmucke begged Schwab to go

at once and inform the Abbé Duplanty, for he was unwilling to leave his friend's side, and Pons was asking for the sacrament.

Seated at the foot of her husband's bed, the Cibot thought nothing of Schmucke's breakfast, and she had, moreover, been turned out of their apartment by the two friends, but the events of this morning, the spectacle of the resigned death of Pons, who was facing death heroically, had so wrung Schmucke's heart that he felt no hunger.

Nevertheless, about two o'clock in the afternoon, having seen nothing of the old German, Madame Cibot, as much from curiosity as from self-interest, asked Rémonencq's sister to go up and see if Schmucke wanted anything. At this very moment the Abbé Duplanty, to whom the poor musician had made his last confession, was administering extreme unction. Mademoiselle Rémonencq consequently disturbed this ceremony by reiterated pulls of the bell. Pons, having made Schmucke swear that he would admit no one, so great was his fear of being robbed, the old German let Mademoiselle Rémonencq go on ringing, so that she finally descended quite frightened and told the Cibot that Schmucke did not open the door to her. This marked circumstance was taken note of by Fraisier. Schmucke, who had never seen anyone die, was about to encounter all the difficulties which beset a man in Paris when he has a corpse upon his hands, especially when he is without help or representatives, or means of succor. Fraisier, who knew that

relations, really afflicted, lose their heads at such a time, and who since morning had been stationed in the porter's lodge in constant conference with Doctor Poulain, now conceived the idea of himself directing all Schmucke's proceedings.

This is how the two friends, Doctor Poulain and Fraisier, went to work to bring about this important result.

The beadle of the Church of Saint-François, a former dealer in glassware named Cantinet, lived in the Rue d'Orléans in the house adjoining that of Doctor Poulain. Madame Cantinet, one of the collectors of the rents of chairs in the church, had been treated gratuitously by Doctor Poulain, to whom she was naturally friendly through motives of gratitude, and to whom she had often related all the troubles of her life. The two Nut-crackers, who attended the services at Saint-François on every Sunday and fête day, were on good terms with the beadle, the verger, the dispenser of holy water, in short, with all that ecclesiastical militia called in Paris the "lower clergy," to whom the faithful are in the habit of giving small donations. Madame Cantinet thus knew Schmucke as well as he knew her. This dame Cantinet was afflicted with two troubles which enabled Fraisier to make of her a blind and involuntary instrument. The young Cantinet, passionately fond of the theatre, had refused to follow a church career in which he might have become a verger, and had made his appearance among the supernumeraries of the ballet at the

Cirque-Olympique; he led a scatterbrained life, which broke his mother's heart, and often emptied her purse by his forced loans. Then Cantinet himself, given over to laziness and liquor, had been driven out of business by these two vices. Far from correcting them, this unfortunate found fresh opportunities for his two passions in his present functions; he did no work and he drank with the hackmen of the wedding parties, with the officials of funerals, with the poor whom the Curé relieved, so that by twelve o'clock in the day his face was usually cardinal-colored.

Madame Cantinet was herself doomed to poverty in her old days, after having, as she said, brought twelve thousand francs of dot to her husband. The history of her misfortune, a hundred times related to Doctor Poulain, suggested to him the idea of using her to facilitate the placing with Pons and Schmucke of Madame Sauvage as cook and general servant. To present Madame Sauvage herself was impossible; for the distrust of the two Nut-crackers was fully roused, and the refusal to open the door to Mademoiselle Remonencq had sufficiently enlightened Fraisier on this subject. But it seemed evident to the two friends that the pious old musicians would accept blindly anyone proposed to them by the Abbe Duplanty. Madame Cantinet, according to their plan, should be accompanied by Madame Sauvage; and Fraisier's servant once there would be as good as Fraisier himself.

When the Abbe Duplanty came down he was

detained a moment in the porte-cochère by the concourse of Cibot's friends, who were testifying their interest in the oldest and most esteemed concierge of the quarter.

Doctor Poulain saluted the Abbé Duplanty, took him apart and said to him:

"I am going up to see that poor Monsieur Pons, who may still recover; it is a question of deciding to submit to the operation of removing the stones which have formed in the vesicle of the gall; they can be felt, they have produced the inflammation which will cause death; but perhaps there may be still time to arrest it. You should indeed make use of your influence over your penitent in persuading him to submit to this operation; I will answer for his life, provided that nothing unfortunate intervenes during the operation."

"As soon as I have carried the sacred vessels to the church I will return," said the Abbé Duplanty, "for Monsieur Schmucke is in a condition which requires religious support."

"I have just learned that he is alone," said Doctor Poulain. "This good German had this morning a little altercation with Madame Cibot, who has been for ten years the housekeeper of those two gentlemen, and they have quarreled, temporarily doubtless; but he must not be left alone without help, in the circumstances in which he finds himself. It is a work of charity to look after him.—Here, Cantinet," said the doctor, calling up the beadle, "ask your wife if she is willing to nurse Monsieur Pons and

look after the housekeeping of Monsieur Schmucke for a few days in Madame Cibot's place,—who in fact, even without this quarrel, would have had to find a substitute.—Madame Cantinet is a trustworthy woman," said the doctor to the Abbé Duplanty.

"You could not choose a better one," answered the good priest, "for she has the confidence of the establishment, for whom she looks after the letting of the chairs."

A few moments later, Doctor Poulain was watching at the bedside of Pons, the progress of his dissolution, while Schmucke vainly implored his friend to submit to the operation. The old musician replied to the despairing entreaties of the poor German only by negative signs of the head, occasionally making impatient gestures. Finally the dying man assembled all his strength, cast at Schmucke a terrible glance and said to him:

"Let me die in peace, will you!"

Schmucke was on the point of expiring of grief himself; but he took the hand of Pons, kissed it softly and held it between his own hands, endeavoring to transfuse once more his own life into his friend. At that moment Doctor Poulain heard the bell sound and went and opened the door to the Abbé Duplanty.

"Our poor patient," said Poulain, "commences his last agony. He will expire in a few hours; you will doubtless send a priest to watch with him this night. But it is time to give Madame Cantinet and a

servant to Monsieur Schmucke, who is incapable of attending to anything. I fear for his reason, and there is property here which should be guarded by most trustworthy people."

The Abbé Duplanty, a good and worthy priest, without suspicion or malice, was struck by the justice of Doctor Poulain's observations; he had a firm faith, moreover, in the physician of the quarter; he accordingly made a sign to Schmucke from the threshold of the death-chamber to come out and speak to him. Schmucke could not bring himself to let go the hand of Pons, which was cramped and clasped to his own as if the dying man were falling over a precipice and sought to fasten upon something that might save him. But, as is well known, those about to die are often the prey of an hallucination which impels them to lay hold of everything around them, like people in a conflagration anxious to save their most valuable objects, and Pons suddenly released Schmucke's hand to grasp the bedclothes and draw them around his body with a horrible and significant movement of avarice and of haste.

"What will become of you, alone with your dead friend?" said the good priest to the German, who then came to him. "You are without Madame Cibot."

"She ees a monsder who has gilled Bons!" said he.

"But you must have some one with you," interposed Doctor Poulain, "for the corpse will have to be watched to-night."

"I vill vatch, I vill bray to Gott," answered the innocent German.

"But you must eat—Who in the meantime will cook for you," said the doctor.

"Zorrow has daken avay mine abbedide," replied Schmucke naively.

"But," said Poulain, "the decease must be declared by witnesses, the body must be unclothed, put in a winding-sheet and sewed up in it, the funeral must be ordered at the Pompes Funèbres, the nurse who takes charge of the corpse and the priest who watches, must have their meals. Can you do that yourself all alone?—People cannot die like dogs in the capital of the civilized world."

Schmucke opened a pair of terrified eyes and was seized with a momentary attack of madness.

"Put Bons shall not die, I vill save heem."

"You cannot last much longer without taking a little sleep, and then who will take your place? For Monsieur Pons must be looked after, and must have his drink and his medicines."

"Ah, dat is drue!"—said the German.

"Well," remarked the Abbé Duplanty, "I think of giving you Madame Cantinet, an honest and worthy woman.—"

These details of the social duties towards his dead friend so overcame Schmucke that he longed to die with Pons.

"He is a child!"—said Doctor Poulain to the Abbé Duplanty.

"A jhild!"—repeated Schmucke mechanically.

"Come," said the vicar, "I will go and speak to Madame Cantinet and send her to you."

"Don't give yourself the trouble," said the doctor. "She is my neighbor, and I am now on my way home."

Death is like an invisible assassin with whom the dying struggle; in the last agony he receives the final blows, he endeavors to strike back and resists. Pons was at this supreme moment, he uttered groans mingled with cries. At that moment Schmucke, the Abbé Duplanty and Poulain ran to his side. Suddenly Pons, receiving in his vitality the last stab which severs the bond which unites soul and body, recovered for a few moments the perfect quietude which follows the death struggle. He came to himself, the serenity of death upon his face, and he looked at those around him with an expression that was almost a smile.

"Ah, doctor, I have suffered much; but you are right, I am better now. Thanks, my good abbé; I was missing Schmucke."

"Schmucke has not eaten anything since yesterday evening, and it is now four o'clock! You have no longer anyone to look after you and it would be dangerous to recall Madame Cibot.—"

"She is capable of anything," said Pons, manifesting all his horror at the very name of the Cibot. "That is true, Schmucke needs some honest person to look after him."

"The Abbé Duplanty and I," said Poulain, "have been thinking about you both."

"I thank you," said Pons, "I did not reflect—"

"He suggests to you Madame Cantinet.—"

"Who rents the chairs!" cried Pons. "Yes, she is an excellent creature."

"She does not like Madame Cibot and she will take good care of M. Schmucke.—"

"Send her to me, my good Monsieur Duplanty,—she and her husband, then I shall be easy. Nothing will be stolen here then.—"

Schmucke had again taken the hand of Pons and held it, joyfully believing that health had come back to him.

"Let us go, Monsieur l'Abbé," said the doctor. "I will send Madame Cantinet at once. I know her;—it is probable she will not find Monsieur Pons living."

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While the Abbé Duplanty was inducing the dying man to take Madame Cantinet for nurse, Fraisier had sent for the chair-renter to his house and subjected her to his corrupting talk, to the crafty influence of his wily power, which it was difficult to resist. Thus Madame Cantinet, a yellow and withered woman, with large teeth and pallid lips, dulled by misfortune, like so many of the women of the poor, and reduced to find happiness in the most trivial daily profits, had soon consented to take with her Madame Sauvage as assistant in the household. Fraisier's servant had already received her instructions. She had promised to weave a wire net around the two musicians, and to watch over them as the spider watches the captured fly. Madame Sauvage was to receive, in return for her trouble, a license to sell tobacco; Fraisier had thus found a means of getting rid of his pretended nurse, and of establishing by Madame Cantinet's side a spy and a gendarme in the person of the Sauvage. As the apartment of the two friends included a small kitchen and a servant's room, the Sauvage could sleep on a cot and cook for Schmucke. At the moment when the two women brought by Doctor Poulain presented themselves, Pons had just rendered his last sigh, without Schmucke having perceived it. The German still held in his hands the

hand of his friend, out of which the warmth was gradually disappearing. He motioned to Madame Cantinet not to speak; but the soldierly Madame Sauvage surprised him so much by her appearance that he made an involuntary movement of fear, to which, indeed, that masculine woman was accustomed.

"Madame," said Madame Cantinet, "is a lady whom Monsieur Duplanty recommends; she has been cook to a bishop, she is honesty itself. She can do your cooking."

"Ah! you can speak out loud," cried the powerful and asthmatic Sauvage. "The poor gentleman is dead!—He has just gone."

Schmucke uttered a piercing cry, he felt the hand of Pons icy, and stiffening in his own and he stood staring, with his eyes fixed on those of Pons, whose expression would have driven him mad, if Madame Sauvage, doubtless accustomed to such scenes, had not gone to the bed, and holding a mirror, presented it before the dead man's lips and as no respiration clouded the glass hastily separated Schmucke's hand from that of the corpse.

"Let go, monsieur, or you won't be able to get loose; you do not know what bones are when they harden! It comes quick, the stiffening of dead bodies. If you don't prepare them while they are still warm you have later to break the limbs.—"

It was, therefore, this terrible woman who closed the eyes of the poor, dead musician; then, with the methodical habit of sick-nurses, a business which

she had followed for ten years, she took off Pons's clothing, stretched him out at full length, fastening the hands on each side of the body and drawing the sheet over his nose, precisely as a clerk makes up a parcel of goods in a store.

"I want a sheet to wrap him in, where can I get one?"—she asked Schmucke, whom this spectacle had paralyzed with terror.

After having witnessed the profound respect with which religion deals with a creature destined to so glorious a future in the heavens, it was an anguish capable of dissolving the very elements of thought to witness this species of packing, in which his dear friend was treated like a thing.

"Dake vad you ligk," answered Schmucke mechanically.

This innocent creature had seen a man die for the first time, and this man was Pons, the sole friend and only being who had ever understood him and loved him!—

"I am going to ask Madame Cibot where the sheets are," said the Sauvage.

"There will have to be a cot bed for this lady to sleep on," said Madame Cantinet to Schmucke.

Schmucke made a sign with his head and burst into tears. Madame Cantinet left the unhappy man alone; but at the end of an hour she came to him and said:

"Monsieur, have you any money to give us to buy some things?"

Schmucke turned on Madame Cantinet a look that

might have disarmed the most ferocious enemy; he indicated the white, sharp and pointed face of the dead, as if it were an answer for everything.

"Dake all, and led me mourn ant bray," he said, kneeling down.

Madame Sauvage had gone to announce the death of Pons to Fraisier, who rushed in a cabriolet to Madame de Marville to request of her the power of attorney which should give him the right to represent the heirs.

"Monsieur," said Madame Cantinet to Schmucke, an hour after her last question, "I have been to see Madame Cibot, who knows all about your household, so that she could tell me where the things are; but as she has just lost Monsieur Cibot, she nearly drove me crazy with her foolishness.—Monsieur, will you listen to me?"

Schmucke looked at this woman, who had no conception of her own harshness, for the lower classes are accustomed to enduring stolidly the greatest moral suffering.

"Monsieur, we must have linen for the winding-sheet, we must have some money for a cot bed for this lady to sleep on; we will have to buy kitchen utensils, plates, dishes and glasses, for the priest will come here to pass the night, and this lady finds absolutely nothing in the kitchen."

"Yes, monsieur," began the Sauvage, "I must have wood and coal to prepare the dinner, and I don't see anything! That is not very surprising, since the Cibot furnished you with everything.—"

"But, my dear lady," said Madame Cantinet, pointing to Schmucke, who lay at the dead man's feet in a state of complete insensibility, "you wouldn't believe me, you see he answers nothing."

"Well, my dear," said the Sauvage, "I'll show you what we do in these cases."

The Sauvage threw around the room a look such as thieves cast when they endeavor to discover the place in which money is hidden. She went straight to Pons's bureau, pulled out the top drawer, saw the bag in which Schmucke had put the remainder of the money derived from the sale of the pictures and brought it to Schmucke and showed it to him; he made a sign of mechanical assent.

"Here is money, my dear," said the Suavage to Madame Cantinet. "I am going to count it, take what is necessary to buy some wine and provisions and candles, in short, everything, for they really have nothing. See if you cannot find me in the bureau a sheet to wrap around the body. They told me that this poor monsieur was simple; but I don't know what he is, he is worse. He is like a new-born baby, we shall have to feed him with a spoon."

Schmucke looked at the two women and at all they did, absolutely as an idiot might have looked at them. Exhausted by grief, sunk into a state that was almost cataleptic, he never ceased to contemplate the face of Pons, which fascinated him, on which the lines grew pure in the absolute repose of death. He hoped to die, and everything was

indifferent to him. The room might have been in flames and he would not have stirred.

"There are twelve hundred and fifty-six francs," —said the Sauvage to him.

He shrugged his shoulders. When the Sauvage wished to prepare the body for burial and measure the linen over it, so as to cut out the winding-sheet and sew it on, there ensued a frightful struggle between her and the poor German. Schmucke was exactly like a dog who bites all who attempt to touch the dead body of his master. The Sauvage, growing impatient, seized the German, thrust him into an arm chair and held him there with herculean strength.

"Come, my dear, sew the corpse in this sheet," said she to Madame Cantinet.

When the operation was over the Sauvage put Schmucke back in his place at the foot of the bed and said to him:

"Do you understand, it had to be done, to truss up the poor man properly as a corpse."

Schmucke commenced to weep; the two women left him and went to take possession of the kitchen, where between them they very soon got together all the necessaries of life. After having run up a first bill of three hundred and sixty francs, the Sauvage prepared the dinner for four persons, and what a dinner! There was the pheasant of cobblers —a fat goose—for the *pièce de résistance*, an omelet *aux confitures*, salad of vegetables and the sacramental *pot-au-feu*, of which the ingredients were so

extravagant in quantity that the broth resembled a meat jelly. At nine o'clock in the evening, the priest sent by the vicar to watch beside the body of Pons, came with Cantinet, who brought four wax-tapers and the church candlesticks. The priest found Schmucke lying at full length on the bed beside his friend, holding him tightly clasped in his arms. It required the authority of religion to induce him to part from the body. The German fell on his knees, and the priest arranged himself comfortably in the arm chair. While the latter read his prayers, and while Schmucke, kneeling by the body of Pons, besought God to reunite him to his friend by a miracle, that he might be put in the same grave, Madame Cantinet went to the Temple and bought a cot bed and complete bedding for Madame Sauvage, for the purse of twelve hundred and fifty-six francs was delivered to pillage. At eleven o'clock in the evening Madame Cantinet came to see if Schmucke would eat a morsel. The German made a sign that he was to be left in peace.

"Your supper is ready, Monsieur Pastelot," she said to the priest.

Schmucke left alone, smiled like a madman who sees himself free to accomplish a desire, comparable only to the longing of a pregnant woman. He flung himself beside Pons and held him once more tightly embraced. The priest came back at midnight, and Schmucke, rebuked by him, released his grasp and returned to prayer. At daybreak the priest went away. At seven o'clock in the morning, Doctor

Poulain came to see Schmucke kindly, and endeavored to make him eat, but the German refused.

"If you eat nothing now you will be hungry when you return," said the doctor to him, "for you must go to the Mayor's office with a witness to declare the decease of Monsieur Pons and get the burial certificate."

"I!" exclaimed the German, terrified.

"And who else?—You cannot get out of it, as you were the only person who saw him die."

"I haf no strengdh in meine legs,"—replied Schmucke, imploring the doctor's assistance.

"Take a carriage," said the hypocritical doctor, gently. "I have already made out the certificate of the death. Get some one in the house to accompany you. These two women will take care of the rooms in your absence."

*

It is difficult to imagine what these vexatious proceedings of the law are to a real grief. It is sufficient to make us hate civilization, to prefer the customs of savages. At nine o'clock, Madame Sauvage brought Schmucke down, holding him under the arms, and he was obliged, when he got into the hackney coach, to beg Rémonencq to go with him to declare the death of Pons at the Mayor's office. Everywhere, and in all matters, there manifests itself in Paris the inequality of conditions—in this city drunk with the idea of equality. This immutable force of circumstances betrays itself even in the events attending a death. In wealthy families a relative, a friend, the business agents, spare the mourners all these hideous details; but in that, as in the assessment of taxes, the people, the proletaires, have to bear all the burden of sorrow without assistance.

"Ah! you have good reason to regret him," said Rémonencq as a complaint escaped the poor martyr, "for he was a very fine man, a very honest man, who has left behind him a fine collection, but do you know, monsieur, you, who are a stranger here, you are likely to find yourself in a great deal of trouble, for they say everywhere that you are Monsieur Pons's heir."

Schmucke was not listening; he was plunged

into such grief that he was bordering on madness. The soul has tetanus, like the body.

"And you would do well to have yourself represented by a lawyer, by a business agent."

"A beeznez achend!" repeated Schmucke, mechanically.

"You will see that you will have to get someone to represent you. If I were in your place, I should find someone of experience, a man known in the quarter, a trustworthy man.—I, myself, in all my little affairs, I employ Tabareau, the bailiff—And if you give your power of attorney to his head clerk you will have no anxiety yourself."

This insinuation, suggested by Fraisier, arranged between Rémonencq and the Cibot, stuck in Schmucke's memory, for in these moments in which grief congeals, as it were, the soul, in arresting all its functions, the memory retains impressions which accident has brought to it. Schmucke listened to Rémonencq, looking at him with an eye so completely devoid of intelligence that the dealer said no more to him.

"If he remains such an imbecile as that," thought Rémonencq, "I shall be able to buy the whole lot of those things upstairs for one hundred thousand francs, that is, if they are really his.—Monsieur, here we are at the Mayor's office."

Rémonencq was obliged to lift Schmucke out of the carriage, and to take him under the arm in order to get him into the office for civil certificates, where Schmucke found himself in the midst of a

wedding party. He was obliged to wait his turn, for, by one of those hazards sufficiently frequent in Paris, the clerk had five or six declarations of decease to draw up. There this poor German might be said to be a prey to an anguish equal to that of Jesus.

"Monsieur is Monsieur Schmucke ?" asked a man in black, addressing the German, who was stupefied at hearing himself called by his own name.

Schmucke looked at this man with the dazed air with which he had listened to Rémonencq.

"Well!" said the dealer to the unknown, "what do you want with him? Let this man alone, you see very well that he is in trouble."

"Monsieur has just lost his friend, and doubtless wishes to honor his memory in a worthy manner, as he is his heir," said the stranger. "Monsieur will certainly not be niggardly; he will buy a burial lot in perpetuity. Monsieur Pons was such a lover of the arts! It would be a great pity not to put upon his tomb a group of Music, Painting and Sculpture,—three fine figures on foot, weeping"—

Rémonencq made the gesture of an Auvergnat to drive this man away, and the man replied by another gesture, which may be called the commercial one, and which signified "let me attend to my business," and which the dealer understood.

"I am the agent of the house of Sonet and Company, furnishers of mortuary monuments," resumed the solicitor, whom Walter Scott would have called the 'young man of the tombstones.' "If monsieur

would be pleased to give us the commission, we would save him the annoyance of going to the cemetery to buy the ground necessary for the burial of a friend, now lost to the arts.''

Rémonencq nodded his head in assent, and nudged Schmucke with his elbow.

''We charge ourselves with all these formalities for families,'' continued the man, encouraged by the Auvergnat's nod. ''In the first moments of his grief, it is very difficult for the heir to attend to such details, and we are accustomed to undertake these little services for our customers. The price of our monuments, monsieur, is regulated by a tariff, —so much a metre, in cut stone or in marble.—We have the grave dug for the family tombs.—We take charge of everything, at most reasonable prices. Our house put up the magnificent monument of the beautiful Esther Gobseck, and of Lucien de Rubempré, one of the most magnificent ornaments of Père-Lachaise. We employ the best workmen, and I should advise monsieur to beware of the small undertakers, who do only cheap and worthless work,'' he added, observing that another man in black was coming towards them to speak for another house of monumental sculpture.

It has often been said that death is the end of a journey, but few persons realize how close this similitude really is in Paris. The deceased, especially if he is of quality, is greeted on the ''sombre shore'' as though he were a traveler disembarking at a port, and whom all the runners of the various hotels

harass with their recommendations. No one, with the exception of certain philosophers, or of a few families sure of being long-lived, who build themselves tombs just as they build themselves houses, no one ever thinks of death and its social consequences. Death comes always too soon; and, moreover, a feeling easily understood prevents the heirs from supposing it possible. So that nearly all those who lose their fathers, their mothers, their wives or children, are immediately assailed by these business runners, who profit by the trouble which grief produces, to procure themselves orders. In former times the agents for sepulchral monuments collected in the vicinity of the famous cemetery of Père-Lachaise, where they formed a lane called the "Street of Tombs," and assailed the heirs on the borders of the grave or at their issue from the cemetery; but, little by little, competition, the genius of speculation, has pushed them to still greater assurance and they have descended into the city, even to the neighborhood of the Mayor's office. In fact, these drummers penetrate even into the house of death itself, a plan of the tomb in their hands.

"I am doing business with monsieur," said the agent of the Maison Sonet to the new agent who presented himself.

"Pons, deceased!—Where are the witnesses?" called out the clerk of the Bureau.

"Come, monsieur," said the runner, addressing Rémonencq.

Rémonencq requested the man to help him lift Schmucke, who was sitting like an inert mass upon the bench; they led him to the balustrade behind which the registrar of the certificates of decease shelters himself from the public grief. Rémonencq, who was now Schmucke's providence, was aided by Doctor Poulain, who came to furnish necessary information as to the age and birthplace of Pons. The German knew only one thing, that Pons was his friend. The signatures once appended, Rémonencq and the doctor, followed by the solicitor, put the poor German into the coach, into which the zealous agent, determined to obtain his order, managed to slip. The Sauvage, posted in observation on the steps of the porte-cochère, took Schmucke, half-fainting in her arms, aided by Rémonencq, and by the agent of the Maison Sonet.

"He is going to be ill,"—said the agent, who was determined to finish the affair which, he said, was commenced.

"I should think so!" replied Madame Sauvage. "He has wept for twenty-four hours and he won't eat anything. Nothing destroys the stomach like grief."

"Now my dear client," said the runner of the Maison Sonet, "do you take a little bouillon. You have so many things to do. You must go to the Hôtel de Ville and purchase the ground necessary for the monument which you wish to erect to the memory of that friend of the arts, and which shall testify to your gratitude."

"But that is not good sense," said Madame Cantinet to Schmucke, coming in with the bouillon and some bread."

"My dear monsieur, if you are so feeble as that," said Rémonencq, "you should think of getting someone to represent you, for you have a host of things to do; the funeral procession will have to be ordered! you don't want your friend to be buried like a pauper."

"Come! Come! My dear monsieur!" said the Sauvage, seizing the moment when Schmucke had let his head fall on the back of the chair.

She put a spoonful of the soup into Schmucke's mouth and made him eat almost despite himself, like an infant.

"There now, if you were wise, monsieur, since you wish to give yourself up quietly to your grief, you would take someone to represent you."—

"Since monsieur," said the runner, "intends to erect a magnificent monument to the memory of his friend, he has only to put the whole matter into my hands, I will attend to it.—"

"What's that? What's that?" said the Sauvage. "Monsieur has given you any orders! Who then are you?"

"One of the agents of the house of Sonet, my dear lady, the largest establishment for funeral monuments,"—said he, drawing out a card and presenting it to the powerful Sauvage.

"Well, that's good! that's good! You will be sent for when they think it convenient, but it is

not necessary to take advantage of the state monsieur is in. You see very plainly that monsieur has not his head."

"If you will manage to arrange it so that we get the order," said the runner of the Maison Sonet in the ear of Madame Sauvage, drawing her out upon the landing, "I am able to offer you forty francs."

"Very well, give me your address," said the Sauvage, much softened.

*

Schmucke, finding himself alone and feeling better after his forced meal of soup and bread, returned promptly to Pons's chamber and gave himself up to prayer. He was lost in the abysses of grief, when he was drawn from his profound absorption by a young man, dressed in black, who said, for the eleventh time "Monsieur!" which the poor martyr heard the better as he felt himself shaken by the sleeve of his coat.

"What ees eet now?"

"Monsieur, we owe to Doctor Gannal the sublime discovery; we do not deny his glory, he has renewed the miracles of ancient Egypt, but there have been some improvements made and we have obtained surprising results. Therefore, if you wish to see your friend again just as he was in life—"

"Zee heem again,"—cried Schmucke, "vill he speek to me?"

"Not absolutely!—Speech itself only will be lacking to him," resumed the agent for embalming; "but he will remain through all eternity such as the art of embalming will show him to you. The operation will take only a few moments. An incision into the carotid artery and one injection suffices; but it is high time.—If you wait a quarter of an hour longer you will not have the tender satisfaction of having preserved the body—"

"Go to der tefil!—Bons ees a zoul,—and dat zoul ees in de zkies."

"That man is without gratitude," said the young runner of one of the rivals of the celebrated Gannal, as he went out through the porte-cochère; "he refuses to have his friend embalmed."

"What do you expect, monsieur," said the Cibot, who had just had her darling embalmed. "He is the heir, the legatee. Now that he has got what he wanted, the deceased ain't nothing to him."

An hour later Schmucke saw Madame Sauvage enter the room, followed by a man in black, who appeared to be a workman.

"Monsieur," she said, "Cantinet has been kind enough to send you monsieur who supplies the coffins for the parish."

The furnisher of coffins bowed with an air of commiseration and of condolence, but with the air of a man sure of his position and aware that he is indispensable. He looked at the body with the eye of a connoisseur.

"How does monsieur wish to have *it*, in pine or plain oak, or in oak lined with lead? Oak lined with lead is the most stylish. The body," he said, "is the ordinary dimensions.—"

He felt for the feet so as to measure the body.

"One metre seventy," he added.—"Monsieur intends, no doubt, to order a funeral service at the church?"

Schmucke threw on this man a look such as

mad men give when they are about to strike a desperate blow.

"Monsieur, you really should," said the Sauvage, "take some one who will occupy himself with all these details for you."

"Yez,"—said the victim at last.

"Do you want me to go and have Monsieur Tabareau, for you are going to have a great many things on your shoulders. Monsieur Tabareau, do you see, is the most honest man in the quarter."

Yez, yez, Mennesir Dapareau, dey tid speek to me of heem,"—replied Schmucke, vanquished.

"Very good—monsieur shall be left in peace and free to indulge his grief after he has had a conference with the agent to whom he has given full powers."

About two o'clock the head clerk of Monsieur Tabareau, a young man who proposed to himself the career of bailiff, modestly presented himself. Youth has surprising privileges—it does not terrify. This young man, whose name was Villemot, sat down beside Schmucke and waited for the right moment to speak to him. This consideration touched Schmucke.

"Monsieur," said he, "I am the head clerk of Monsieur Tabareau, who has given me the charge of looking after your interests here and taking in hand all the details of the funeral of your friend—Is it your wish that I should do so?"

"You gannod zave mein laife, vor I haf nod long to leeve, pud vill you led me be in beace?"

"Oh! you shall not have any trouble," replied Villemot.

"Denn,--vat moost I do vor dat?"

"Sign this paper, in which you appoint Monsieur Tabareau your mandatory in all matters concerning the inheritance."

"Goot. Geef eet to me," said the German, wishing to sign instantly.

"No, it is my duty to read over the instrument to you."

"Reat it."

Schmucke paid not the slightest attention to the reading of this general power of attorney, and he signed it.

The young man took his orders for the funeral, for the purchase of the ground where the German wished the grave to be, and for the service at the church, assuring him that he should have no further trouble, and that no demands for money should be made upon him.

"To haf beace, I vould geef all dat I bossez," said the unfortunate man, who once more knelt down beside the body of his friend.

Fraisier triumphed, and the legatee could not make one step outside the circle in which he was held fast by the Sauvage and Villemot.

There is no grief that sleep cannot conquer. Towards the end of the day the Sauvage found Schmucke extended on the foot of the bed on which the body of Pons was stretched, and sound asleep; she carried him off, put him to bed, and arranged

him in it, maternally, and the German slept until the morrow. When he awoke, that is to say, when after this truce his sorrow again took possession of him, the body of Pons was exposed under the porte-cochère in the *Chapelle Ardente*, to which the funerals of the third class have a right; he sought his friend in vain through this apartment, which seemed to him immense and in which he found only frightful souvenirs. The Sauvage, who governed Schmucke with the authority of a nurse over her little one, compelled him to eat some breakfast before going to the church. While this poor victim was forcing himself to eat, the Sauvage called his attention, with lamentations worthy of Jeremiah, to the fact that he did not possess a black coat. Schmucke's wardrobe, taken care of by Cibot, had arrived before Pons's sickness, like his dinner, to its simplest expression,—two pantaloons and two coats!—

"You are going to go as you are to the funeral of monsieur? That would be an abomination that would shame us through all the quarter!"—

"And how do you veesh dat I zhould go?"

"Why, in black."—

"Plaak?"

"The proprieties—"

"Brobrieties!—I toan'd gare vor any zooch nonzenzes!" said the poor man, driven to the last degree of exasperation, to which suffering can force a child-like soul.

"Why, he is a monster of ingratitude," said the Sauvage, turning towards a man who suddenly

appeared in the apartment, and who made Schmucke shudder.

This functionary, magnificently dressed in black cloth, with black knee-breeches and black silk stockings, with white cuffs at his wrists, decorated with a silver chain, from which hung a medal, with a very correct white muslin cravat and white gloves —this official type, one of those struck out with the same die for all public obsequies, held in his hand an ebony wand, in sign of his functions, and under the left arm a three-cornered hat with a tricolored cockade.

"I am the master of ceremonies," said this personage in a soft voice.

Accustomed in the exercise of his functions to daily attend funerals and to enter families plunged in the same affliction, sincere or feigned, this man, in common with all his colleagues, spoke in a low voice, and gently; he was decent, polite and simple by profession, like a statue representing the genius of Death. This announcement gave Schmucke a nervous shock, as though he had seen the executioner.

"Monsieur is the son, the brother, the father of the deceased?"—inquired the official.

"I am all dat ant more—I am heez frient!"—said Schmucke, with a burst of tears.

"Are you the heir?" asked the master of ceremonies.

"The heir?" repeated Schmucke, "Eet ees all the zame to me, in thees vorld."

And he sank again into the attitude of his gloomy sorrow.

"Where are the relatives, the friends?" asked the master of ceremonies.

"Here dey are, all ov dem," cried Schmucke, indicating the pictures and the curiosities. "Nefer did these mage mein boor Bons zuffer!—Here eez all he lofed vit me!"

"He's crazy, monsieur," said the Sauvage to the master of ceremonies. "Go along, it's useless to listen to him."

Schmucke had re-seated himself and had resumed his idiotic expression, wiping away, mechanically, his tears. At this moment Villemot, the head clerk of Monsieur Tabareau appeared; and the master of ceremonies, recognizing the person who had called to order the funeral, said to him:

"Well, monsieur, it is time to start—the hearse is here; but I have seldom seen such a procession as this one. Where are the relatives, the friends?"—

"We have not had much time," replied Monsieur Villemot; "monsieur is plunged into such grief that he could think of nothing; but there is only one relation.—"

The master of ceremonies looked at Schmucke with a pitying air, for this expert in suffering was able to distinguish the true from the false, and he went close to Schmucke:

"Come, my dear monsieur—courage!—Endeavor to honor the memory of your friend."

"We have forgotten to send notices of the funeral,

but I took the pains to send a messenger to Monsieur le Président de Marville, the only relative, whom I mentioned to you—There are no friends—I don't believe that the people of the theatre, where the deceased was leader of the orchestra, will come—But this gentleman is, I believe, sole legatee."

"Then he must be chief mourner," said the master of ceremonies. "Have you no black coat?" he asked, looking at Schmucke's costume.

"I am all plaack eenzite,"—said the poor German, in a heart-rending voice; "ant zo plaack dat I veel teadh in me—Gott vill do me die merzy to unide me to mein frient in the doomb and I vill dangk heem!"—

And he clasped his hands.

"I have often said to our administration, which has already introduced so many improvements," said the master of ceremonies, addressing Villemot, "that it ought to keep a mourning wardrobe and let out costumes to the heirs,—it is a thing that is getting more and more necessary every day—But since monsieur is the heir he must take a mourning cloak, and that which I have brought will wrap him up so completely that no one will perceive the inappropriateness of his costume.—Will you have the goodness to rise?" said he to Schmucke.

Schmucke rose, but he tottered on his legs.

"Hold him up," said the master of ceremonies to the head clerk, "as you are his proxy."

Villemot supported Schmucke by taking him under the arm, and then the master of ceremonies seized

that ample and horrible black mantle, which they throw over heirs when they follow the funeral car from the house of mourning to the church, and fastened it by silk cords under his chin.

And Schmucke was thus duly appareled as the heir.

"Now, here's another great difficulty," said the master of ceremonies. "We have the four corners of the pall to hold up. If there's nobody, who will support them?—It is now half-past ten," said he, looking at his watch—"they are waiting for us at the church."

"Ah, there is Fraisier!" cried Villemot, very imprudently.

No one, however, noticed this admission of complicity.

"Who is this gentleman?" asked the master of ceremonies.

"Oh! it is the family."

"What family?"

"The disinherited family. He is the proxy of Monsieur le Président Camusot."

"Very good," said the master of ceremonies, in a tone of satisfaction. "We can at least have two of the tassels held, one by you, the other by him."

The master of ceremonies, happy at having two of his tassels "garnished," fetched two splendid pairs of white doeskin gloves, and presented them, first to Fraisier, then to Villemot, with a polite air.

"Will these gentlemen be kind enough each to take one of the corners of the pall?"—said he.

Fraisier, all in black, dressed with care, a white cravat and official demeanor, was enough to cause a shudder—he expressed one hundred legal documents.

"Willingly, monsieur," he replied.

"If we had only two persons more," said the master of ceremonies, "the four tassels could all be held."

*

At this moment the indefatigable agent for the house of Sonet and Company arrived, followed by the only man who had thought of Pons and who wished to pay him the last duties. This was a supernumerary of the theatre, one of whose duties was to lay out the scores on the desks of the orchestra, and to whom Pons gave a monthly gratuity of five francs, knowing him to be the father of a family.

"Ah! Dobinard (Topinard)!"—cried Schmucke, recognizing him. "You lof Bons!—"

"Yes, monsieur, and I have come every day in the morning to inquire for him—"

"Efery tay! Boor Dobinard," said Schmucke, pressing the hand of the poor supernumerary.

"But they took me, without doubt, for a relation and they received me very ill. It was no use saying I came from the theatre and wanted to know how Monsieur Pons was,—they said to me that they knew those tricks. I asked to see the poor, dear sick man, but they never would let me come up."

"Thad invamooz Zipod!"—said Schmucke, pressing to his heart the horny hand of the theatre employé.

"He was the king of men, that brave Monsieur Pons. Every month he gave me one hundred sous—He knew that I had three children and a wife. My wife is at the church."

"I vill defite mein lasd grusd mit you!" cried Schmucke, in his joy at having some one near him who loved Pons.

"Will monsieur take one of the tassels of the pall?" said the master of ceremonies. "We shall then have all four."

The master of ceremonies had easily persuaded the runner for the house of Sonet to take one of the corners, more especially in showing him the fine pair of gloves which, according to custom, was to be his perquisite.

"It is a quarter to eleven!—we must start immediately,—they are waiting at the church," said the master of ceremonies.

Then these six persons descended the stair-case.

"Close the apartment up tight and stay there," said the atrocious Fraisier to the two women who were standing on the landing, "especially if you wish to keep the place, Madame Cantinet. Ah! it is forty sous a day for you!—"

By an accident which is not at all uncommon in Paris there were two coffins under the porte-cochère, and consequently two funeral processions, that of Cibot, the defunct concierge, and that of Pons. No one appeared to pay any tribute of affection to the handsome catafalque of the friend of the arts, but all the door-keepers of the neighborhood thronged to sprinkle the mortal remains of the concierge with holy-water. This contrast between the crowd which had come to the funeral of Cibot and the solitude in which Pons remained, was noticeable not

only at the door of the house but also in the street, where the coffin of Pons was followed only by Schmucke, who was supported by an undertaker's assistant, for the heir seemed about to faint at every step. From the Rue de Normandie to the Rue d' Orléans, in which the church of Saint-François is situated, the two funeral processions passed along between two hedges of curious spectators, for as we have said, everything is an event in that quarter. The lookers-on remarked upon the splendor of the white hearse from which hung an escutcheon and upon which was embroidered a large "P," which had only one man following it; while the simple hearse, that of the lowest class, was accompanied by an immense crowd. Fortunately, Schmucke, bewildered by the heads at the windows and by the hedges which the crowded gazers formed, heard nothing, and only saw this concourse of persons, through the veil of his tears.

"Ah! it is the Nut-cracker,"—said one, "the musician, you know!"

"Who are the persons who hold the tassels?"—

"Bah! only actors!"

"Look—see the procession of the poor Père Cibot! Ah! There was a hard worker at least! What a drudge he was!"

"He never went out, that man!"

"He never took a holiday."

"How he did love his wife!"

"And there's an unhappy woman!"

Rémonencq was following the coffin of his victim,

and received complimentary condolences on the loss of his neighbor.

These two processions arrived at the church, where Cantinet had arranged with the verger that none of the beggars should speak to Schmucke. Villemot had promised the heir that he should be left in peace, and he accordingly attended to all the minor details and watched over his client. The modest funeral of Cibot, escorted by from sixty to eighty persons, was accompanied by all this crowd to the cemetery. When the funeral of Pons left the church four mourning coaches were waiting; one for the clergy, and three others for the relations; but only one was necessary, for the agent for the house of Sonet had gone during the service to apprise Monsieur Sonet of the departure of the procession in order that he could present the design and the estimate for the monument to the legatee, as he came out of the cemetery. Fraisier, Villemot, Schmucke and Topinard occupied the first coach. The two others, instead of returning to their establishment, went empty to Père-Lachaise. This useless trip of empty carriages often occurs. When the deceased have not attained to any celebrity, and therefore have few mourners, there are always too many carriages. The dead need to have been very much beloved during life to be followed to the grave in Paris, where everybody wishes to find a twenty-fifth hour to the day and, therefore, cannot find time to follow a parent or a friend to the cemetery. But the drivers of the coaches would lose their *pourboire*

if they did not make their appearance. Thus, full or empty, the coaches go to the church and the cemetery and return to the house of death, where the coachmen demand their drink-money. No one knows the number of people for whom Death is a watering trough,—the lower clergy, the poor, the undertakers' men, the drivers of coaches, the gravediggers,—all these spongy natures come out swollen after their plunge in these funeral ceremonies.

From the church, where the heir was assailed as he left it, by a crowd of paupers who were immediately dispersed by the verger, all the way to Père-Lachaise, the poor Schmucke went as the criminals used to go from the Palais to the Place de Grève. He was conducting his own funeral, holding in his hand the hand of the theatre man, Topinard, the only man who had in his heart a real regret for the death of Pons. Topinard, extremely touched with the honor which they had done him in confiding to him one of the cords of the pall, and pleased at driving in a carriage and possessing a fine pair of gloves, began to feel that Pons's funeral marked for him one of the great days of his life. Sunken in grief, sustained by the contact of this hand which represented a heart, Schmucke let himself be rolled along like those unhappy calves carried in carts to the slaughter-house. On the forward seat of the carriage sat Fraisier and Villemot. Now, those who have had the misfortune to accompany many of their friends to their last resting-place are aware that all hypocrisy is laid aside in the funeral coach

during the ride, which is often very long, from the church to the Cimetière de l'Est, that particular Parisian cemetery where all the vanities and all the luxuries give each other rendezvous, and where the sumptuous monuments congregate. The indifferent mourners commence the conversation, and the most afflicted end by listening to them and forgetting themselves.

"Monsieur le Président had already started for the court," said Fraisier to Villemot, "and I didn't think it worth while to drag him from his duties at the Palais, he would have come too late in any case. As he is the natural and legal heir, though disinherited in favor of Monsieur Schmucke, I thought that it would be sufficient if his representative were present."

Topinard began to listen.

"And who is that queer fellow who made the fourth pall-bearer?" said Fraisier to Villemot.

"He is the agent for a firm that puts up funeral monuments, and he wanted to get an order for a tomb, on which he proposes to carve three figures in marble—Music, Painting and Sculpture—weeping over the deceased."

"Quite an idea," replied Fraisier. "The old man merits something like that; but that monument would cost at least seven or eight thousand francs."

"Oh! yes."

"If Monsieur Schmucke gave the order, that could not necessarily affect the property, for an estate may be eaten up in such expenses.—"

"There might be a lawsuit, and they would win it.—"

"Well," resumed Fraisier, "that will be his affair. That would be a good trick to play those furnishers,"—said Fraisier in Villemot's ear, "for if the will is broken, and I will answer for that—or if there should be no will at all, who is it that will pay them?"

Villemot laughed maliciously. The man of law and the head clerk of Tabareau spoke in low tones and in each other's ears; but, despite the noise of the wheels and all the other disturbances, the theatre employé, accustomed to guess at meanings in the world of the green-room, discovered that these two lawyers were plotting some trouble for the poor German, and he finally heard the significant word *Clichy!* From that moment this worthy and faithful servant of comedy resolved to keep watch over the friend of Pons.

At the cemetery, where, thanks to the agent of the Maison Sonet, Villemot had purchased three metres of ground from the city, announcing that a magnificent monument would be erected on it, Schmucke was conducted by the master of ceremonies, through a curious crowd, to the grave into which Pons was to be lowered. But when he saw this square hole, above which four men were holding the coffin of Pons suspended by ropes, over which the priest was saying his last prayer, the German was seized with such a contraction of the heart that he fainted away.

Topinard, assisted by the agent of the house of Sonet, and by Monsieur Sonet himself, carried poor Schmucke into the establishment of the marble-cutter, where the kindest and most generous attentions were showered on him by Madame Sonet and Madame Vitelot, the wife of Monsieur Sonet's partner. Topinard remained there, for he had noticed that Fraisier, whose aspect seemed to him to promise the gallows, was in conference with the agent of the house of Sonet.

At the end of an hour, about half-past two o'clock, the poor innocent German recovered his senses. He thought that he had been dreaming for two days. He imagined that he should wake up and find Pons living. There were so many damp cloths on his forehead and he had been made to inhale so much salts and vinegar that he opened his eyes. Madame Sonet forced him to drink some good strong broth, for the *pot-au-feu* was prepared in the marble-cutter's household.

"It doesn't happen often that we have to take care thus of customers who feel as deeply as this; but it may be seen, however, about once in two years.—"

At last Schmucke spoke of returning to the Rue de Normandie.

"Monsieur," then said Sonet, "here is the design which Vitelot has made expressly for you, and he sat up all night to do it!—But he has been truly inspired! It will be very fine—"

"It will be one of the finest in Père-Lachaise," said little Madame Sonet, "but you would be right

to honor the memory of a friend who has left you his whole fortune—"

This monument, said to have been "designed expressly," had been prepared for De Marsay, the famous minister; but his widow having preferred to entrust his monument to Stidmann, the design of these marble-cutters had found no sale, for people generally have a horror of monuments kept in stock. The three figures represented originally the days in July, in which that great minister distinguished himself. Since then, with some modifications, Sonet and Vitelot had made of the "Three Glorieuses," the Army, Finance and Family, for the monument of Charles Keller, but this was also executed by Stidmann. For the last eleven years the design had been adapted to every possible family circumstance; but in tracing it anew for this occasion, Vitelot had transformed the three figures into those of the genius of Music, Sculpture and Painting.

"The cost is really nothing, if we consider the details and the construction; but in six months we could have it completed," said Vitelot. "Monsieur, here is the estimate and the contract,—seven thousand francs, not including the labor."

"If monsieur wishes marble," said Sonet, who was more particularly a marble cutter, "it will be twelve thousand francs, and monsieur will immortalize himself with his friend.—"

"I have just heard that the will is to be contested," said Topinard in Vitelot's ear, "and that

the heirs will be certain to recover their property; you had better go and see Monsieur le Président Camusot, for this poor innocent will not have a liard—"

"You are always bringing us customers like that!" said Madame Vitelot, to the agent, beginning a dispute.

*

Topinard took Schmucke back to the Rue de Normandie on foot, for the funeral carriages had already returned there.

"Toan'd leaf me!"—said Schmucke to Topinard.

Topinard wished to go away after having consigned the poor musician to the hands of dame Sauvage.

"It is four o'clock, my dear Monsieur Schmucke, and I must go and get my dinner—My wife, who is a box-opener, won't know what has become of me. You know the theatre opens at a quarter to six."—

"Yez, I know—pud zhust dingk, I am alone in the vorldt, I haf no frient. You who haf wepdt for Bons, insdruct me. I am in a plaack nighd, and Bons dolt me I waz zurrountet mit rascals—"

"I have already seen that, and I prevented them from putting you to bed in Clichy!"

"Gligy?"—cried Schmucke. "I toan'd unterstant."

"Poor man! Well, don't worry—I will come again and see you. Good-bye."

"Atieu! Redurn zoon," said Schmucke, dropping down, almost dead with weariness.

"Adieu Môsieu!" said Madame Sauvage to Topinard, in a tone that struck that follower of the drama as peculiar.

"Oh, what's the matter with you, good woman?"

he said jokingly. "You stand there like a traitor in a melodrama."

"Traitor yourself! What are you meddling about here? Are you going to run monsieur's affairs, and make a little something for yourself?—"

"Little something for myself!—you scullion,"—returned Topinard, proudly. "I am only a poor worker at a theatre, but I belong to artists and I would have you know I ask nothing from anyone. Has anybody asked anything of you? Does anybody owe you anything, old woman?"—

"You belong to the theatre, and your name is —?" demanded the virago.—

"Topinard, at your service."

"Luck go with you," said the Sauvage, "and my compliments to *Médème*, if *Môsieur* is married—That is all I want to know."

"What's the matter, my dear?"—said Madame Cantinet, who came in.

"I wish, my little one, that you would stay here and look after the dinner. I am going to kick this monsieur down stairs.—"

"He is down stairs, he is talking with that poor Madame Cibot, who is shedding all the tears in her body," replied the Cantinet.

The Sauvage rushed down the stairway with such rapidity that the steps shook under her feet.

"Monsieur,"—said she to Fraisier, drawing him a few steps away from Madame Cibot.

And she indicated Topinard at the moment when the theatre employé passed out, proud of having

paid his debt to his benefactor, by hindering—with a ruse inspired by the side scenes—where everyone is more or less roguish—the friend of Pons from falling into a trap. Moreover, he promised himself to protect the musician of his orchestra against all the traps that might be set for his credulity.

"Do you see that little wretch!—he is a sort of honest man who wishes to stick his nose into Monsieur Schmucke's affairs."

"Who is he?" asked Fraisier.

"Oh, nobody—"

"There is no such thing as a nobody in business."

"Well," she said, "he is a man belonging to the theatre, named Topinard."—

"Very good, Madame Sauvage! Go on as you are doing and you shall have your tobacco license."

Fraisier returned to his conversation with Madame Cibot.

"As I was saying, my dear client, you have not played fair with us, and we are not bound to keep terms with an associate who deceives us!"

"And in what have I deceived you?"—said the Cibot, putting her hands on her hips. "Do you think you are going to scare me with your verjuice looks and your snaky ways?—You are hunting for bad reasons to break your promises, and you call yourself an honest man!—Do you know what you are? You are the scum of the earth. Oh, yes, scratch your arm!—but put that in your pocket!"

"Don't talk so much, don't get angry, my dear," said Fraisier. "Listen to me! You have feathered

your own nest—This morning during the preparations for the funeral I found this catalogue in duplicate, written throughout in Pons's hand. And by chance my eyes fell on this."

And he opened the manuscript catalogue and read as follows:

"'*No. 7—Magnificent portrait painted on marble by Sebastien del Piombo in 1546, sold by a family who had caused it to be carried off from the Cathedral of Terni. This portrait, which formerly had as pendant a portrait of a bishop, bought by an Englishman, represents a Knight of Malta in prayer, and was placed over the tomb of the Rossi family. If it were not for the date, this picture might be attributed to Raphael. This work seems to me superior to the portrait of Baccio Bandinelli in the Musee, which is somewhat dry, whilst this Knight of Malta has a freshness of color due to the preservation of the painting on the* LAVAGNA (slate).'"

"When I looked," resumed Fraisier, "at the place of No. 7, I saw there a portrait of a lady, signed *Chardin* and no No. 7 at all!—While the master of ceremonies was completing the number of his pall-bearers I verified all the pictures, and I found eight substitutions of common pictures without numbers, for works named as of the first importance by the late Monsieur Pons, and which are not to be found at all—There is also missing a little picture on wood, by Metzu, which is designated as a masterpiece—"

"Am I the keeper of the pictures—I?" demanded the Cibot.

"No, but you were the confidential housekeeper,

looking after the household and the affairs of Monsieur Pons, and there has been robbery—"

"Robbery! Learn, monsieur, that the pictures were sold by Monsieur Schmucke under the orders of Monsieur Pons to meet their expenses."

"To whom?"—

"To Messieurs Élie Magus and Rémonencq."

"For how much?"—

"I don't remember—"

"Listen, my dear Madame Cibot, you have filled your pockets and they are pretty plump!"—resumed Fraisier. "I have my eye on you, I will look out for you—Serve me well and I will keep silence! In any case, you are to count on receiving nothing from Monsieur le Président Camusot, inasmuch as you have thought proper to plunder him."

"I knew very well, my dear Monsieur Fraisier, that it would turn out there was nothing for me," replied the Cibot, softened by the words, "I will be silent."

"Look here," said Rémonencq, appearing on the scene, "are you picking a quarrel with madame; that isn't right!—The sale of the pictures was made on a natural understanding with Monsieur Pons, between Monsieur Magus and myself, and we were three days before coming to an agreement with the deceased, for he dreamed about those pictures! We have the receipts all in order, and if we gave, as is done, a few forty-franc pieces to madame, she only got what we give in all bourgeois houses where we conclude a bargain. Ah! my dear monsieur, if

you think you are going to deceive a defenseless woman, you have come to the wrong shop!—Do you hear me, you pettifogger? Monsieur Magus is master of the situation, and if you don't draw it mildly with madame here, if you don't give her what you have promised her, I will go to the sale of the collection, you will see what you will lose if you have Monsieur Magus and myself against you, who would know how to stir up the dealers. Instead of seven or eight hundred thousand francs you wouldn't get two hundred thousand!"

"Very well, very well, we will see! We won't sell at all," said Fraisier, "or we will sell in London."

"We know London, too," said Rémonencq, "and Monsieur Magus is as powerful there as he is in Paris."

"Adieu, madame, I may pluck your feathers," said Fraisier; "unless you obey me always," he added.

"You little sharper!"

"Take care," said Fraisier, "I am to be *juge-de-paix.*"

They parted with menaces, which were well-understood on both sides.

"Thank you, Rémonencq," said the Cibot. "It is a good thing for a poor widow to find a protector."

That evening, at about ten o'clock, Gaudissart sent for Topinard to come into his private office at the theatre. Gaudissart, standing before the chimney, had taken a Napoleonic attitude, assumed since

he had been directing a world of actors, dancers, chorus-hands, musicians and machinists and had been negotiating with authors. He habitually slipped his right hand into his vest, grasping his left suspender, holding his head in three-quarters profile and casting his glance into the void.

"Ah, Topinard, have you any property to live on?"

"No, monsieur."

"Are you looking for some place better than the one you have?" asked the director.

"No, monsieur," answered the supernumerary, turning pale.

"What the devil! Your wife is box-opener on the first tier—I have let her keep that position out of respect for my failed predecessor—I gave you the job of cleaning the lamps of the side scenes during the day; and finally you have charge of the scores for the orchestra. That isn't all! you have extra pay of twenty sous for making the monsters and for marshaling the devils when there are hells. It is a place coveted by all the supernumeraries, and it is coveted, my friend, in the theatre, where you have enemies."

"Enemies!" said Topinard.

"And you have three children, of which the eldest plays the juvenile parts with extra pay of fifty centimes!—"

"Monsieur—"

"Let me speak," said Gaudissart, in a thundering voice. "In such a position as that, you wish to quit the theatre."

"Monsieur—"

"You wish to meddle with other people's affairs and to stick your fingers into legacies! But, you miserable man, you will be crushed like an egg! I have for protector His Excellency, Monseigneur le Comte Popinot, a man of intelligence and of a high character, whom the King has in his wisdom called to a place in his Council—This statesman, this representative of high political power,—I speak of the Comte Popinot,—has married his eldest son to the daughter of the President de Marville, one of the most important and respected men in the superior judiciary and the chief luminary of the law at the Palais. You know the Palais? Well, he is the heir of his cousin Pons, the late leader of our orchestra, to whose funeral you went this morning. I don't blame you for going to pay the last duty to that poor man—But you won't keep your place here if you go and meddle in the affairs of the worthy Monsieur Schmucke, to whom I wish well, but who will find himself in very delicate complications with the heirs of Pons—And, as this German is very little to me, and as the president and Comte Popinot are a great deal to me, I advise you to let this worthy German disentangle his own affairs. There is a special God for the Germans, and you would make a very poor sub-God! do you see, you had better stay where you are! you can't do better."

"Enough, Monsieur le Directeur," said Topinard, heart-broken.

*

Schmucke, who expected the next day to see this poor theatre employé, the only being who had shed a tear for Pons, thus lost the protector whom chance seemed to have sent him. The poor German woke on the morrow to a sense of the immense loss which had befallen him, in seeing the empty apartment. During the two preceding days, the events and the bustle attending the death had produced around him that excitement, that movement, which distracts the eyes. But the silence which follows the departure of a friend, of a father, of a son, of a beloved wife, for the tomb, the cold silence of the morrow, is terrible, it is glacial. Drawn by an irresistible impulse into the chamber of Pons the poor man could not endure its aspect, he recoiled, and returned to his seat in the dining-room, where Madame Sauvage served the breakfast. He sat down, but could not eat. Suddenly the bell rang rather loudly, and three men in black appeared, for whom Madame Cantinet and Madame Sauvage made way. First Monsieur Vitel, *juge-de-paix*, and his clerk appeared. The third was Fraisier, more bitter, more harsh than ever, having just encountered the disappointment of hearing that there was another will, legally drawn, which annulled the powerful weapon he had so audaciously stolen.

"We have come, monsieur," said the *juge-de-paix* gently to Schmucke, "to affix the seals here."—

Schmucke, to whom these words were Greek, gazed at the three men with a frightened air.

"We have come at the request of Monsieur Fraisier, advocate, the representative of Monsieur Camusot de Marville, heir of his cousin, the late Sieur Pons—" added the clerk.

"The collection is there in the large salon and in the bedroom of the deceased," said Fraisier.

"Very good. We will pass on — Excuse us, monsieur. Go on with your breakfast," said the *juge-de-paix.*

The invasion of the three men in black had frozen the poor German with terror.

"Monsieur," said Fraisier, directing on Schmucke one of those venomous glances which magnetized his victims as a spider magnetizes a fly, "monsieur, who has contrived to have a will made in his own favor before a notary must expect to meet with some opposition from the rightful heirs. No family will permit themselves to be robbed by a stranger without making resistance, and we shall see, monsieur, which will get the better, fraud and corruption, or the family.—We have a right, as legitimate heirs, to demand that the seals be affixed, this will be done, and I will see that this protective act be performed with the utmost rigor, and it will be."

"Mine Gott, mine Gott! what grime haf I gommitted against Heafen?" said the innocent Schmucke.

"They are talking a great deal about you in the house," said the Sauvage. "While you were asleep

there came a little, young man, all dressed in black, a little puppy, the head clerk of Monsieur Hannequin, and he insisted on seeing you; but as you were asleep and as you were worn out with the fatigues of the ceremony of yesterday, I told him that you had given a power of attorney to Monsieur Villemot, the head clerk of Monsieur Tabareau, and that if he had come on business, to go and see him. 'Ah! so much the better,' said the little, young man —'I can come to an understanding with him. We are going to deposit the will with the court after showing it to the president.' So, on that I asked him to send Monsieur Villemot here to us as soon as he could. Be easy, my dear monsieur," said the Sauvage, "you will have people to defend you. And they won't shear the wool from your back. You will have some one who has teeth and claws! Monsieur Villemot will teach them their business—As for me, I have already been in a passion with that frightful beggar of a Madame Cibot, a concierge who takes it upon herself to judge her tenants and who declares that you have filched this fortune from the heirs, that you have locked up Monsieur Pons, that you have made a tool of him, that he was crazy enough to be put in a straight-jacket, but I revenged you on her in fine style, the wretch! 'You are a thief and a pig,' I said to her, 'and you will go to the assizes for all the things you have stolen from your gentlemen!'—And she shut her mouth."

"Monsieur," said the clerk, coming back to Schmucke, "do you wish to be present when

the seals are affixed in the bed-room of the deceased?"

"To id, to id," said Schmucke, "I brezume thad I gan tie in beace?"

"One has always a right to die," said the clerk, laughing, "and our chief business is with the property they leave behind them. But I have seldom seen the sole heir following the testators into the tomb."

"I vill to zo," said Schmucke, who felt, after so many blows, an intolerable anguish.

"Ah! here's Monsieur Villemot," cried the Sauvage.

"Mennisir Fillemod," said the poor German, "bleas do rebresend me—"

"I hasten to do so," said the head clerk. "I have come to inform you that the will is entirely in order, and will certainly be confirmed by the court which will put you in possession—You will have a fine property."

"I—a vine broberdy!" cried Schumcke, in despair, at being suspected of covetousness.

"Meantime," said the Sauvage, "what is he doing there, that *juge-de-paix*, with his candles and his little bands of tape?"

"Ah! he is affixing the seals—Come, Monsieur Schmucke, you have a right to be present."

"No, bleaze go yourzelv—"

"But why does he put on the seals if monsieur is in his own house, and if everything belongs to him?" asked the Sauvage, making a law for herself,

like all women, who interpret the code according to their own ideas.

"Monsieur is not in his own house, madame, he is in that of Monsieur Pons; everything will belong to him without doubt, but when one is legatee one can only take possession of the property which composes the inheritance by what we call a mandate of possession. This is issued by the court. Now, if the heirs, dispossessed of the inheritance by the will of the testator, contest the mandate in possession, then there is a law-suit—And, as it is not known to whom the succession will fall, all the property is put under seal, and the notaries of the heirs and of the legatee proceed to make the inventory during the delay required by law. And that is how it is."

Hearing this legal language for the first time in his life, Schmucke lost his head altogether. He let it fall on the back of the armchair in which he was sitting, it was so heavy that it was impossible for him to sustain it. Villemot went to talk with the clerk and the *juge-de-paix*, and assisted, with the coolness of long practice, in the placing of the seals, which, if no heirs are present, is seldom accomplished without a few jests, and without some observations made on the articles which are thus fastened up until the day of their distribution. At last the four limbs of the law closed the salon and re-entered the dining-room, where the clerk continued his work. Schmucke watched this operation mechanically, which consisted in sealing with the

official seal of the *juge-de-paix* a tape on each leaf of the doors when they were folding doors, or to seal up the openings of the wardrobes, or of the doors in fastening the two sides of the opening.

"Let us go into this room," said Fraisier, pointing to Schmucke's chamber, the door of which opened into the dining-room.

"But that is monsieur's own room!" said the Sauvage, springing forward and putting herself between the lawyers and the door.

"Here is the lease of the apartment," said the frightful Fraisier, "we found it among the papers, and it is not in the names of Messieurs Pons and Schmucke—it is in the name of Monsieur Pons only. This entire apartment is part of the property.—Besides," he added, opening the door of Schmucke's chamber, "see, Monsieur le *juge-de-paix*, it is full of pictures."

"So it is," said the justice, yielding at once to Fraisier's lead.

"Stop a moment, messieurs," said Villemot. "Do you think that you are going to turn out of the door the sole legatee, whose rights up to the present, have not been contested?"

"Yes, yes," said Fraisier. "We forbid deliverance of the legacy."

"And under what pretext?"

"You will soon know, my little man," said Fraisier, jeeringly. "At this time we will not oppose the legatee from withdrawing all articles which he declares to belong to him personally in this room;

but it will be sealed up. And monsieur can go and lodge wherever he likes."

"No," said Villemot, "monsieur will stay in his own room!"

"How?"

"I will have a report drawn up," resumed Villemot, "to demonstrate to you that we are tenants of the half of this apartment and that you cannot turn us out of it.—Take away the pictures, decide on those which belong to the deceased and those which are my client's, but my client will stay here,—my little man!"

"I vill go avay," said the old musician, who recovered his energy in listening to this horrible debate.

"You had better!" said Fraisier. "That would save you expense, for you will not gain your cause. The lease is formally made out—"

"The lease, the lease!" said Villemot, "that is a matter of good faith!—"

"It cannot be proved, as in criminal affairs, by testimony.—Are you going to rush into expert testimony, verifications, interlocutory judgments, and bring a suit?"—

"No, no!" cried Schmucke, terrified. "I vill moof oud, I vill go avay—"

Schmucke's life was that of a philosopher, cynical without knowing it, so much was it reduced to the simplest expression. He possessed only two pairs of shoes, one pair of boots, two complete suits of clothes, twelve shirts, twelve silk handkerchiefs,

twelve pocket handkerchiefs, four waistcoats, and a superb pipe, which Pons had given him with an embroidered tobacco-pouch. He went into his chamber, roused to action by a fever of indignation, and gathered up all his belongings and laid them on a chair.

"All thad iz mein!"—said he, with a simplicity worthy of Cincinnatus; "the biano is alzo mein."

"Madame," said Fraisier to the Sauvage, "will you get some help to carry it down and put it on the pavement,—this piano?"

"You are too harsh," said Villemot to Fraisier. "Monsieur le *juge-de-paix* is the master to order what he wishes—he is the master in this affair."

"There is property there," said the clerk, pointing to the bed-room.

"Moreover," observed the justice, "monsieur leaves of his own free-will."

"Did anyone ever see such a client!" said Villemot, turning on Schmucke indignantly. "You are as limp as a rag."—

"Vad gan id madder vhere I tie?" said Schmucke, going out. "Theze men haf vazes lige big digers.—I vill zent for mein boor dings," he added.

"Where is monsieur going?"

"Verefer it bleases Gott," said the sole heir, making a sublime gesture of indifference.

"Let me know where," said Villemot.

"Follow him," whispered Fraisier to the head clerk.

Madame Cantinet was appointed guardian of the

seals, and of the moneys found on the premises she was allowed a provision of fifty francs.

"That's going all right," said Fraisier to Monsieur Vitel, when Schmucke had departed. "If you wish to resign your position in my favor go and see Madame la Présidente de Marville, you will come to an understanding with her."

"You have found a man of butter!" said the *juge-de-paix*, pointing to Schmucke, who was standing in the courtyard, looking up for the last time at the windows of the apartment.

"Yes, the affair is in good shape," replied Fraisier. "You can safely marry your grand-daughter to Poulain. He will be physician-in-chief of the *Quinze-Vingts.*"

"We will see about it—Adieu, Monsieur Fraisier," said the *juge-de-paix*, with the air of good-fellowship.

"That is a man of resources," said the clerk. "He will go far, the hound."

*

It was now eleven o'clock, the old German took, mechanically, the route he had so often followed with Pons, thinking of Pons; he saw him incessantly, he fancied he was at his side, and he arrived before the theatre, out of which came his friend Topinard, who had just cleaned all the lamps of the establishment, with his mind full of the tyranny of his director.

"Ah! here is mein avvair," cried Schmucke, stopping the poor super. "Dobinart, haf you a blace to lif in?"

"Yes, monsieur."

"Ein houzehold?"

"Yes, monsieur."

"Vill you take me to poart? Oh, I vill bay you vell—I haf nein huntret vrancs a year—ant I haf not long to lif—I vill make you no drouble.—I toan'd eat ad all.—Mein only desire ees to smoke mein bibe—ant az you are die only one who haz vept vor Bons mit me, I lof you."

"Monsieur, I would do it with a great deal of pleasure; but first, figure to yourself that Monsieur Gaudissart has been wigging me—"

"Vigging you?"

"That is a way of saying that he combed my hair."

"Gombed your hair?"

"He scolded me for taking an interest in you.—

It will then be necessary to be very discreet if you come to my house! But I don't believe that you will stay there, for you do not know what the home of a poor devil like me is—''

''I shall lige much petter the boor home of a man of hard who has vept for Bons than the Duileries with men who haf vaces lige digers. I haf zhust come oud from seeing digers in Bons's abartment, who vill defour all!—''

''Come, Monsieur,'' said the other, ''and you will see—but—In fact, there is a loft—We will consult Madame Topinard.''

Schmucke, like a sheep, followed Topinard who conducted him into one of those horrible localities which might be called the cancers of Paris. This is known as the *cité* Bordin. It is a narrow passage flanked with houses built as they build them on speculation, and it opens from the Rue de Bondy, in that part of the street which is overshadowed by the immense building of the theatre of the Porte-Saint-Martin, one of the warts of Paris. This passage, whose road-bed is sunk below the level of the street pavement, slopes down into the Rue des Mathurins-du-Temple. The *cité* ends by a traverse street that bars it at one end in the form of a letter ''T.'' These two lanes thus disposed at right angles contain about thirty houses of six or seven stories each, of which the interior courtyards, and all the apartments contain warerooms, small manufactories and industries of every kind. It is the Faubourg Saint-Antoine in miniature. Here they

make furniture, they engrave brass, they sew costumes for the theatres, they manufacture glassware, they paint porcelain, they manufacture, in short, all the novelties and varieties of the *article-Paris*. Dirty and productive as commerce itself, this passage, always full of people coming and going, of carts, of drays, is repulsive in aspect, and the population which swarms there is in harmony with the products and the locality. They are people of small trades and manufactures, people intelligent in manual labor, but whose intelligence is all absorbed in it.

Topinard lived in this *cité*, flourishing by means of its industries, because of the low price of rents. He occupied the second house to the left at the entrance. His apartment, situated on the sixth floor, had a view over that zone of gardens which still exist, and which belong to the three or four large mansions of the Rue de Bondy.

Topinard's residence consisted of a kitchen and two chambers. In the first of these two chambers were the children. There might be seen in it two little beds in white wood, and a cradle. The second room was the bed-room of the Topinard pair. The family ate in the kitchen. Above, extended a half-story or loft about six feet in height, with a zinc roof, lighted by a window in the slope of the roof. It was reached by a stairway in white wood called, in builders' jargon, "a miller's ladder." This room, denominated a servant's bed-room, enabled the owner of the house to designate the Topinard lodging as a complete apartment, and to

charge four hundred francs a year for it. At the entrance, to mask the kitchen, there was an arched recess, lighted by a circular window opening into the kitchen, and formed by the junction of the door of the first chamber and that of the kitchen—in all, three doors. These three rooms, floored with brick, papered with frightful paper at six sous per roll, ornamented with chimneys of the kind called *à la capucine*, painted with a cheap color in imitation of wood, contained the belongings of five persons, of which three were children. On the walls could be seen the deep scratches made by the three children, as high as their arms could reach. Wealthy people would find it difficult to imagine the simplicity of a kitchen furnishing, which consisted of a broiler, a large boiler, a gridiron, a saucepan, two or three kettles and a frying-pan. The plates and dishes, in brown and white earthenware, were worth about twelve francs. The table did the double duty of kitchen-table and dining-table. The furniture consisted of two chairs and two stools. The space under the oven with its hood was filled with a provision of wood and coal. And in the corner stood the tub, in which was washed, frequently at night, the family linen. The room occupied by the children, which had clothes-lines stretched across it, was spotted with theatre posters and with engravings taken from the newspapers, or with the prospectuses from illustrated books. Evidently the eldest of the Topinard family, whose school-books might be seen in a corner, was entrusted with the care of

the household after six o'clock, when the father and mother departed for their service at the theatre. In very many poor families of the lower classes, as soon as a child attains the age of six or seven years, it plays the part of a mother to its younger brothers and sisters.

It will be perceived from this slight sketch that the Topinard family was, according to the phrase now become proverbial, "poor but honest." Topinard was about forty years of age, and his wife, a former leader of the choruses, the mistress, it was said, of the bankrupt director whom Gaudissart had succeeded, was about thirty. Lolotte had been a handsome woman, but the misfortunes of the late administration had so reacted upon her, that she had seen herself under the necessity of contracting with Topinard a theatre-marriage. She did not doubt that as soon as their establishment saw itself possessed of one hundred and fifty francs Topinard would redeem his promises and marry her legally, if only to legitimize his children, whom he adored. In the morning, during her leisure moments, Madame Topinard sewed for the wardrobe of the theatre. These courageous supernumeraries realized by gigantic labors nine hundred francs a year.

"Another flight!" said Topinard, at each floor after the third, to Schmucke, who didn't even know whether he was descending or ascending, so much was he absorbed in his misery.

At the moment when the former, dressed in white canvas like all persons employed about the theatre,

opened the door of the kitchen, the voice of Madame Topinard was heard crying:

"Come, children, be quiet! here is papa!"

And as without doubt the children did what they liked with papa, the eldest continued to command a charge in remembrance of the Cirque-Olympique, mounted on a broom stick, the second, to blow into a tin fife, and the third, to follow as best he could, the bulk of the army. The mother was sewing on a theatrical costume.

"Shut up!" cried Topinard in a formidable voice, "or I will slap!—Always have to say that to them," he added in a whisper to Schmucke.—"Here, my girl," he said to the box-keeper, "here's Monsieur Schmucke, the friend of that poor Monsieur Pons; he doesn't know where to go and he wishes to come to us; it is of no use that I have told him that we were not gorgeous, that we lived on the sixth floor, that we had only a loft to offer him, he insists on it—"

Schmucke had seated himself on a chair which the woman pushed forward for him, and the children, abashed at the arrival of a stranger, were huddled together in a group, delivering themselves to that profound examination, mute and quickly finished, which distinguishes childhood, accustomed, like dogs, to scent things rather than to judge of them. Schmucke looked at the pretty group, in which was a little girl, five years old, the one who had blown in the trumpet, and who had magnificent blond hair.

"She is laike a leedle Cherman!" said Schmucke, making her a sign to come to him.

"Monsieur will be very uncomfortable up there," said the mother; "if I were not obliged to have my children near me I would offer him our room."

She opened the door of the chamber and made Schmucke enter it. This chamber contained all the luxury of the apartment. The mahogany bedstead was draped with curtains of blue calico, edged with white fringe. The same blue calico in the shape of curtains decorated the window. The bureau, the secretary, the chairs, although of mahogany, were all well cared for. There was on the mantel-shelf a clock, some candle-sticks, evidently former gifts from the bankrupt, whose portrait, a hideous painting by Pierre Grassou, hung above the bureau. All the children, to whom entrance to this sacred place was forbidden, cast inquisitive glances through the door.

"Monsieur would be comfortable there," said the box-keeper.

"No, no," replied Schmucke. "I haf not long to lif—I only vish a gorner in vich to tie."

The door of the bed-chamber closed and they went up into the garret; as soon as Schmucke had seen it, he cried: "Dat's vat I vandt!—Before I lifd mit Bons I vas nefer bedder lotged dan dees."

"Well, we shall only have to buy a bed, two mattresses, a bolster, a pillow, two chairs and a table. That will not kill a man;—that may cost about fifty écus, with the wash-basin, the pot and a little bed-side carpet."

*

Everything was arranged, only the fifty écus were lacking. Schmucke, who was within two steps of the theatre, naturally thought of demanding his salary of the director, when he saw the poverty of his new friends—He went at once to the theatre and found Gaudissart there. The director received Schmucke with that rather stiff politeness which he assumed for artists, and was astonished at the request made by Schmucke for a month's salary. Nevertheless, the accounts being examined, the demand was found to be a just one.

"Ah! the devil, my good man!" said the director to him, "the Germans know how to keep accounts, even in the midst of their tears—I thought you would be grateful for the gift of a thousand francs! a whole year's salary, which I sent to you, and which was worth a receipt!"

"We nefer receevt anyding," said the good German; "ant if I now gome to you it is pegause I am in die sdreed ant mitoud a liart—Py whom did you send the cratuity?—"

"By your housekeeper."

"Montame Zipod!" cried the musician. "Zhe has gilled Bons, zhe has stolen, zhe has zolt hees broberty.—Zhe dried to purn hees vill.—She is a hoozy—a monzder!"

"But, my good fellow, how is it that you are

without a sou, in the street, with your position of sole legatee? That is not logical, as we say.''

''They durnet me oud ov toors—I am a sdranger, I know noding of dose laws—''

''Poor man,'' thought Gaudissart, foreseeing the probable end of an unequal struggle—''Listen to me,'' said he. ''Do you know what you ought to do?''

''I have a peezenez achent!''

''Well then, negotiate at once with the heirs; you will have from them a sum down, and an annuity, and you can live in peace.''

''I ton'd vant anyding elze!'' replied Schmucke.

''Very good, then let me arrange that for you,'' said Gaudissart, to whom Fraisier had revealed his plan the night before.

Gaudissart thought that he might be able to ingratiate himself with the young Vicomtesse Popinot and her mother by the conclusion of this dirty affair, and he would be at least, one day, counsellor of state, he said to himself.

''I audorize you to agt vor me—''

''Very well, let us see! In the first place, hold!'' said the Napoleon of the theatres of the Boulevard, ''here are one hundred écus—''

He took from his purse fifteen louis and handed them to the musician.

''They are for you, they are six months advance on your salary; then, if you leave the theatre you can pay them back to me. Now, let's make an estimate. How much do you spend a year? How

much is necessary to make you happy? Come now! consider yourself a Sardanapalus!—''

''I need a zuid of gloaz for vinder and anoder for zummer—''

''Three hundred francs!'' said Gaudissart.

''Shoes, four bairs—''

''Sixty francs—''

''Zdoggings—''

''Twelve pair, that's thirty-six francs—''

''Zigs jhirds—''

''Six cotton shirts, twenty-four francs, as many of linen, forty-eight; say, seventy-two. We have now four hundred and sixty-eight; say five hundred, with the cravats and the handkerchiefs, and one hundred francs for washing—six hundred francs! After that how much do you need to live on?—three francs a day?''

''No, dad ees doo mooch!—''

''Stay, you must have some hats—that makes fifteen hundred francs and five hundred for rent—two thousand. Do you want me to get you an annuity of two thousand francs—good security?—''

''And mine dopacco?''—

''Twenty-four hundred francs! — Ah! Papa Schmucke, you require that tobacco?—Very well, we will throw in the tobacco. It is then twenty-four hundred francs of annuity—''

''Dad ees nod all! I moost haf zome gash town—''

''Pin money!—that's it!—These Germans! they are so simple!—The old Robert Macaire!'' thought

Gaudissart.—"Well, what do you want?" repeated he. "But nothing after this."

"It eez to bay a sagret tedt."

"A debt," thought Gaudissart; "the scamp. He is worse than an eldest son! He'll invent notes of hand next! We must pull up! that Fraisier can't see things on a grand scale! What debt, my good man? Tell me!—"

"There vas only von man dad mournet for Bons mit me—He has a bretty leedle curl who has maknivicend hair. She zeems to me zhust now laike the Cheniuz of my boor Chermany, vich I oughd nefer to haf qvitted.—Baris is not goot for the Chermans—dey riticule dem here,—" said he, making the little movement of the head, of a man who thinks he sees all things clearly in this lower world.

"He is crazy!" thought Gaudissart.

And moved to pity for this innocent, the director felt a tear in his eye.

"Ah! you untersdant me, Mennesir le Tirecdir! Well, dis man who has the leedle girl is Dobinard, who attends in de orchesdra and lighdts de lambs; Bons lofed heem and dook gare of heem. He was the only one who aggompanied mein only frient to the vuneral, to the jurch, to the zemetery.—I vant dree douzant francs for him and dree douzant for the leedle curl.—"

"Poor man!"—thought Gaudissart.

This hardened parvenu was touched by this nobility, and by this gratitude for a nothing in the

eyes of the world, but which, in the eyes of this divine lamb, outweighed like Bossuet's cup of water all the victories of conquerors. Gaudissart concealed under all his vanities, under his ruthless desire to succeed and to raise himself to the level of his friend Popinot, a good heart and a kind nature. So now he effaced at once all his hasty judgments of Schmucke and came over to his side.

"You shall have all that! But I will do better, my dear Schmucke. Topinard is an honest man—"

"Yez, I haf joost zeen him in hees boor houze, vhere he is habby ant condent with his jiltren."

"I will give him the cashier's place, for old Baudrand is going to leave me."

"Ah! may Gott plez you!" cried Schmucke.

"Well, my good honest man, come to M. Berthier's, the notary, at four o'clock this afternoon; everything shall be settled and you will be free from care for the rest of your days. You shall have your six thousand francs, and you may have the same salary with Garangeot that you had with Pons."

"No," said Schmucke, "I gannot lif!—I haf no longer the heard for anyding—I am proken town—."

"Poor sheep!" said Gaudissart to himself, saluting the German, who went away. "One lives on cutlets after all. And as the sublime Béranger says:

"Poor sheep, forever shorn!"

And he hummed that political sentiment to get rid of his emotions.

"Call up my carriage," he said to his office-attendant.

Then he went down and cried to the coachman:

"Rue de-Hanovre!"

The man of ambition was once more uppermost! He saw the Council of State.

Schmucke was at that moment buying flowers, and he carried them, with some cakes, almost joyously to the children of Topinard.

"I cot you zome gakes," he said, with a smile.

This smile was the first that had been seen on his lips for three months, and anyone seeing it would have shuddered.

"I gif dem to you on von gondission," he added.

"You are too good, monsieur," said the mother.

"De leedle curl moost giss me, and arranche die flowers een her hair joost lige de leedle Cherman curls!"

"Olga, my daughter, do just what monsieur wishes you—" said the box-keeper, assuming a severe air.

"Toan'd scolt mein leedle Cherman!"—cried Schmucke, who saw his dear Germany in this little child.

"All your traps are coming here on the shoulders of three porters!" said Topinard, entering.

"Ah!" said the German, "mein frient, here are doo hundert vrancs to bay for eet—You haf a goot vife here, and you vill marry her, vill you nod! I gif you a dousand écus—The leedle curl zhe vill haf a tode of a dousand écus, vich vill be blaced in

her name. And you vill be no longer man-of-all vork—you vill be gashier of the dheatre—''

''I? In place of old Baudrand?''

''Yez.''

''Who told you so?''

''*Mennesir Cautissart!*''

''Oh! it is enough to make one crazy with joy! And, I say, Rosalie, won't they be jealous at the theatre!—But it is not possible,'' he added.

''Our benefactor must not sleep in the loft.''

''Pah! Vor the vew tays I haf to lif,'' said Schmucke, ''eet ees goot enough!—Atieu! I go to the zemetery—to see vat has peen tone with Bons —and orter zome vlowers vor his crafe!—''

*

Madame Camusot de Marville was a prey to the liveliest anxiety. Fraisier held counsel with her, and with Godeschal and Berthier. Berthier, the notary, and Godeschal, the attorney, considered the will made by two notaries in presence of two witnesses as incontestable, in consequence of the precise manner in which it had been drawn by Léopold Hannequin. According to the worthy Godeschal, Schmucke, even if his present counsel succeeded in deceiving him, would soon be enlightened, were it only by one of those attorneys who, to distinguish themselves, have recourse to acts of generosity and of delicacy. The two ministerial lawyers quitted Madame de Marville accordingly, after strongly advising her to beware of Fraisier, concerning whose character they had naturally obtained some information. At this moment Fraisier himself, returning from the sealing up of Pons's effects, was drawing up a legal summons in the president's private cabinet, into which Madame de Marville had shown him, at the request of the two ministerial officers, who saw the business too dirty for a president to be mixed up with, according to their expression, and who wished to give their opinion to Madame de Marville without being heard by Fraisier.

"Well, madame, where are those gentlemen?" said the former advocate of Mantes.

"Gone!—Advising me to give up the whole affair!" replied Madame de Marville.

"Give it up!" said Fraisier, in a tone of suppressed rage. "Listen, madame—"

And he read the following paper:

"On the petition of, etc., etc.,—(I omit the legal verbiage):

"WHEREAS, there has been deposited in the hands of Monsieur le Président of the First Civil Court, a will drawn by Maitres Léopold Hannequin and Alexandre Crottat, Notaries of Paris, in the presence of two witnesses, the Sieurs Brunner and Schwab, foreigners domiciled in Paris, by the which will Sieur Pons, deceased, has disposed of his whole fortune to the prejudice of the present complainant, his natural and legal heir, to the profit of one Sieur Schmucke, a German;

"AND WHEREAS, the complainant is able to show that the said will is the work of improper influence and the result of stratagems forbidden by law; that it can be proven by eminent personages that it was the intention of the testator to leave his fortune to Mademoiselle Cécile, daughter of the said Sieur de Marville; and that the said will, which the said complainant now asks may be annulled and set aside, was procured from the testator when in feeble health and in plain dementia;

"AND WHEREAS, the Sieur Schmucke, for the purpose of obtaining this residuary legacy, kept the testator in durance, that he prevented the family

from approaching his death-bed, and that, after having arrived at this result, he was guilty of acts of notorious ingratitude, which have scandalized the household and all the neighbors of the quarter, who, as it chanced, were present as witnesses to pay the last duties to the doorkeeper of the house in which the testator deceased;

"AND WHEREAS, still other and graver facts, for the proofs of which the complainant is now seeking, will be laid before Messieurs the Judges of the Tribunal;

"THEREFORE, I, the undersigned, officer of the court, etc., etc., summon the said Sieur Schmucke to appear before Messieurs the Judges composing the first chamber of the Tribunal to show cause why the said will drawn by Maitres Hannequin and Crottat shall not be regarded as the result of evident and undue influence and shall not be put aside as null and of no effect; AND I do moreover in the said name protest against whatever powers and qualifications said Sieur Schmucke may assume as sole legatee, seeing that the complainant intends to oppose, and does hereby oppose, by this PETITION presented this day to Monsieur le Président, the order of possession asked for by the said Sieur Schmucke, on whom a copy of this present summons has been served and of which the costs are —" etc.

"I know the man, Madame la Présidente, and when he has read this love-letter he will come to terms. He will consult Tabareau, and Tabareau will tell

him to accept our offers! Will you give him the thousand écus of annuity?"

"Certainly; I should be glad to pay the first instalment at once."

"It can all be settled in three days—This summons will seize him in the first bewilderment of his grief, for he mourns for Monsieur Pons, the poor man. He has taken this loss very seriously."

"If the summons is once served, can it be withdrawn?" said the president's wife.

"Certainly, madame, one can always abandon a case."

"Well, then, monsieur," said Madame Camusot, "go on! Keep on! Yes, this property which you procured for me is worth the risk! Besides, I have arranged for the resignation of Vitel, but you will pay sixty thousand francs to Vitel out of the proceeds of the Pons estate.—And so, you see, we positively must succeed."

"You have his resignation?"

"Yes, monsieur; Monsieur Vitel has perfect confidence in Monsieur de Marville."

"Well, madame, I have already saved you sixty thousand francs, which I calculated would have to be given to that vile concierge, that Madame Cibot. But I must insist upon the tobacco-license for the woman Sauvage, and for the nomination of my friend Poulain to the vacant place of physician-in-chief of the *Quinze-Vingts.*"

"That is understood, it is all arranged."

"Very well — then everything is settled. —

Everybody is on your side in this affair, even Gaudissart, the director of the theatre, whom I went to see yesterday, and who promised me to smooth out the theatre-attendant who might have deranged our projects."

"Oh! I know it. Monsieur Gaudissart is quite devoted to the Popinots!"

Fraisier left the house. Unfortunately he did not meet Gaudissart, and the fatal summons was immediately despatched.

The avaricious will understand, as well as honest people will execrate, the joy of the president's wife, to whom twenty minutes after Fraisier's departure Gaudissart came to report his conversation with poor Schmucke. Madame de Marville approved of everything, she was also infinitely obliged to the director of the theatre for easing all her scruples by certain observations which he made, and which she found eminently just.

"Madame la Présidente," said Gaudissart, "I have been thinking as I came along that this poor devil would never have known what to do with his fortune! His is a nature of the simplicity of a patriarch! He is innocent, he is German, he should be prepared as a specimen, he should be put under glass like a little Jesus in wax! In fact, it is my opinion that he is already embarrassed with his twenty-five hundred francs annuity and you are really inciting him to debauchery—."

"It is really worthy of a noble heart," said the president's wife, "to enrich this fellow who regrets

our cousin. But for my part, I greatly deplore the little misunderstanding which separated Monsieur Pons and me; if he had come back to us, all would have been forgiven him. If you will believe it, my husband really misses him. Monsieur de Marville was greatly distressed at not having received any notice of the death, for he has a truly religious reverence for all family duties and he would certainly have attended the funeral service and followed to the cemetery, and I, myself, should have gone to the church—"

"Ah! well, my dear madame," said Gaudissart, "will you have the deed prepared? at four o'clock I will bring to you the German.—Present my respects, madame, to your charming daughter, Vicomtesse Popinot, and ask her to say to my illustrious friend, her husband's good and excellent father, that distinguished statesman, how heartily I am devoted to him and his, and that I beg him to continue his precious favor to me. I owe my life to his uncle, the judge, and I owe to him my fortune—I should desire to obtain through you and your daughter the respect and high consideration attached to those who hold honorable positions. I wish to leave the theatre and become a serious man."

"You are that already, monsieur," said the president's wife.

"Adorable!" exclaimed Gaudissart, kissing her dry hand.

At four o'clock were assembled in the office of

Monsieur Berthier, notary,—first Fraisier, author of the whole affair, then Tabareau, holding Schmucke's power of attorney, and Schmucke himself, brought by Gaudissart. Fraisier had taken care to place in bank-notes the six thousand francs demanded, and six hundred francs for the first instalment of the annuity on the desk of the notary and under the eyes of the old German, who, stupefied at the sight of so much money, paid not the slighest attention to the deed which was being read to him. The poor man, seized upon by Gaudissart on his return from the cemetery where he had been communing with Pons and promising to rejoin him soon, was not in full possession of his faculties, already shaken as they were by so many shocks. He therefore did not hear the preamble of the deed in which he was represented as assisted by Maître Tabareau, bailiff, his proxy and counsel, and in which were stated the charges contained in Monsieur de Marville's summons in the interests of his daughter. The German was placed in an unfortunate position, for by signing the deed he admitted the truth of Fraisier's frightful assertions; but he was so overjoyed at seeing the money for the Topinard family, and so happy to enrich, according to his humble ideas, the only man who loved Pons, that he did not hear a single word of this transaction of the summons. In the middle of signing the deed a clerk entered the office.

"Monsieur," he said to his employer, "there is a man who wishes to speak to Monsieur Schmucke—"

The notary, at a sign from Fraisier, shrugged his shoulders significantly.

"Don't disturb us in this way when we are signing deeds. Ask the name of the—Is it a man, or a gentleman? Is it a creditor?—"

The clerk returned and said:

"He says he must positively speak to Monsieur Schmucke."

"His name?"

"His name is Topinard."

"I will go and see him. Sign, nevertheless," said Gaudissart to Schmucke. "Finish what you are doing! I will find out what he wants."

Gaudissart had understood Fraisier, and both of them scented danger.

"What are you doing here?" said the director to his employé. "You don't want to be cashier then? The first duty of a cashier is discretion."

"Monsieur—"

"Go about your business. You will never be anything if you interfere with other people's affairs."

"Monsieur, I will eat no bread of which every mouthful would stick in my throat!—Monsieur Schmucke!" he called out.

Schmucke, who had signed the deed and held the money in his hand, came out on hearing Topinard's cry.

"Here ees vor the leedle Cherman and vor you—"

"Ah! my dear Monsieur Schmucke, you have enriched monsters; people who have wished to rob you

of your good name. I have carried this to an honorable man, a lawyer who knows that Fraisier, and he says you ought to punish such wickedness by meeting the suit and that would frighten them and they would give it up.—Read that."

And this imprudent friend gave Schmucke the summons sent him in the *cité* Bordin. Schmucke took the paper, read it, and perceiving how he had been treated, comprehending nothing of the trickery of the procedure, he received a mortal blow. The gravel choked his heart. Topinard caught him in his arms; they were standing under the notary's porte-cochère. A coach passed and Topinard called to the driver and got into it with the poor German, who was now in the agony of a serous congestion of the brain. His sight was dim; but the musician still had strength to give the money to Topinard. Schmucke did not succumb to this first attack, but he never recovered his reason; his movements were all unconscious, and he ate nothing. He died at the end of ten days without uttering a complaint, for he never spoke again. He was nursed by Madame Topinard and buried in a humble way by the side of Pons, under the direction of Topinard, the sole person who followed to the grave this son of Germany.

Fraisier, appointed *juge-de-paix*, is very intimate in the household of the president and much appreciated by the president's wife, who has not allowed him to marry "Tabareau's daughter;" she promises something infinitely better to the clever man to

whom, according to her own sense of her obligations, she owes not only the acquisition of the meadows around Marville and the cottage, but also the election of the president who became Deputy in the general re-election of 1846.

*

Everyone will undoubtedly wish to know what has become of the heroine of this history,—a history, unfortunately, only too true in all its details and which, together with its predecessor of which it is the twin-sister, proves that the grand social force, is strength of character. You will guess at once, amateurs, connoisseurs and dealers, that we are speaking of the collection of Pons! It will suffice to be present at a conversation held at the house of Comte Popinot, who was showing only a few days ago his magnificent collection to certain foreigners.

"Monsieur le comte," said a foreigner of distinction, "you possess treasures!"

"Oh, my lord," said Comte Popinot, modestly, "in the matter of pictures, no one, I will not say in Paris, but in Europe, can pretend to rival an obscure Jew, named Élie Magus, a fanatical old man, the chief of picture maniacs. He has collected over one hundred pictures which are really enough to discourage any amateur from undertaking to collect. France will have to sacrifice seven or eight millions to acquire this gallery at the death of this over-rich man.—As to curiosities, my collection is fine enough to deserve some mention—"

"And how is it possible that a man so occupied as you are, whose original fortune was honestly gained in commercial pursuits—?"

"As a druggist," interrupted Popinot, "how is it that I have continued to occupy myself with these things—"

"No," replied the foreigner; "but how have you managed to find the time to search for them? Curiosities do not come to us of themselves—"

"My father," said the Vicomtesse Popinot "always had the nucleus of a collection. He was fond of the arts, of beautiful works; but the greater part of his treasures came through me!"—

"Through you, madame?—So young!—You already had those vices?" said a Russian prince.

The Russians are such imitators that all the maladies of civilization are reflected in them. The bric-à-brac mania rages at St. Petersburg, and, as a result of the zeal natural to these people, they have raised the price of what Rémonencq called "the article" so high that the work of the collector is rendered impossible. And this prince was now in Paris for the sole purpose of adding to his collection.

"Prince," said the vicomtesse, "I inherited this treasure from a cousin who loved me much and who had passed more than forty years, from 1805, in picking up in all countries, and principally in Italy, all these masterpieces."

"And what was his name?" asked the English lord.

"Pons," said President Camusot.

"He was a charming man," said Madame de Marville, in her fluty little voice, "full of wit, original, and with it all he had a good heart. This

fan which you admire, my lord, and which belonged to Madame de Pompadour, he gave it to me one morning with a pretty little speech, which you will excuse me for not repeating—"

And she glanced at her daughter.

"Tell us the pretty speech, madame la vicomtesse," said the Russian prince.

"The speech is worthy of the fan," replied the vicomtesse, to whom, indeed, this phrase was stereotyped. "He said to my mother that it was quite time that that which had been in the hands of vice should pass into those of virtue."

The English milord looked at Madame Camusot de Marville with an air of doubt that was extremely flattering to so shrivelled a woman.

"He dined with us three or four times a week," she resumed. "He loved us so much! We knew how to appreciate him, the artists like those who share their tastes. My husband was, moreover, his only relation. And, when this inheritance came to Monsieur de Marville, who did not in the least expect it, Monsieur le Comte Popinot preferred to buy the whole collection rather than have it sold at auction; and we too, we much preferred to have it sold thus, for it would have been distressing to have seen all these beautiful things, which our dear cousin had so much enjoyed, dispersed in every direction! Élie Magus appraised them; and it was thus, my lord, that I was able to purchase the cottage built by your uncle, and where you must do us the honor to come and see us."

The cashier of the theatre, of which Gaudissart resigned the directorship about a year ago, is still Monsieur Topinard. But Monsieur Topinard has become gloomy, misanthropical and taciturn; he appears to have committed some crime, and the malicious wits of the theatre pretend that his chagrin comes from having married Lolotte. The name of Fraisier still gives a shock to the honest Topinard. Perhaps it may be found strange that the only soul worthy of Pons and of Schmucke should be found in the third lowest rank of a boulevard theatre.

Madame Rémonencq, mindful of the prediction of Madame Fontaine, is unwilling to retire to the country, she still remains in her magnificent shop on the Boulevard de la Madeleine, once more a widow. In fact, the Auvergnat, after having so arranged the marriage-contract that the survivor should inherit the whole property, left a little glass of vitriol in his wife's way, counting on an accident; and his wife, having the best intentions, placed the little glass elsewhere, and Rémonencq swallowed the contents. This end, worthy of this villain, tells in favor of Providence, whom the painters of morals and manners are accused of forgetting, probably because the endings of so many dramas put Providence in the wrong.

Pray excuse the faults of the copyist!

Paris, July, 1846, May, 1847.

THE END.

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